

U.N. chief Annan agrees 'in principle' to visit Iran

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has "accepted in principle" an invitation to visit Tehran in December for a summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, U.N. officials said Thursday. The invitation came from Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati during a meeting held Wednesday in conjunction with the Earth Summit here, the officials said. The U.S. has had an embargo against Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution toppled the Shah. It accuses Iran of terrorism and sabotaging the Middle East peace process.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي

Majali describes Jordan's efforts towards peace

TUNIS (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali described Jordan's efforts to realise the goals of the Middle East peace process with Arab ambassadors in Tunis Thursday. Dr. Majali said that Jordan was devoted to finding ways of increasing the level of cooperation between Arab countries. The meeting was attended by Dr. Majali's accompanying delegation and Jordan's ambassador to Tunisia. Meanwhile, the Tunisian press reported that the results of the Jordanian-Tunisian meetings were successful in developing the bilateral relations between the two countries.

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Nomads on the verge of famine — Red Cross

NAIROBI (AFP) — Drought-stricken nomads in northeastern Sudan are on the verge of famine, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies warned Friday. "If rain does not fall within the coming two months, survival for many of an estimated 300,000 agro-pastoralists in the Red Sea hills will be in question," the federation said in a statement issued in Nairobi. The Sudanese Red Crescent, supported by the Federation, was just starting an operation to distribute 2,000 tonnes of Sorghum and 1,400 tonnes of other foodstuffs to the desperate Beja nomads, it said. "Having lost much of the livestock on which their existence depends, serious malnourishment is now widespread and worsening." Negligible rainfall over the past two years had eroded scant pasture and led to crop failure, the federation said.

U.S. 'disappointed' at lifting of ban on female circumcision

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. is "disappointed" by an Egyptian court's ruling that once again permits the traditional practice of female circumcision, the State Department said Thursday. "The U.S. strongly supported the decision to ban this abhorrent practice," spokesman John Dinger said. An administrative court in Cairo Tuesday overturned a year-old health ministry ban on female circumcision in Egypt, calling it an "abuse of power. The U.S. government will continue to urge an end to this violence against women," Mr. Dinger said. "It has been widely condemned by international experts as damaging to both the physical and psychological health of women."

Fifty villages damaged in latest Iran quake

TEHRAN (AFP) — At least 50 villages were damaged by a large earthquake which shook northeastern Iran on Thursday, the official news agency IRNA reported Friday. But the quake — the latest in almost daily tremors to hit the stricken Khorasan province near the border with Afghanistan — caused no casualties, Iranian officials told the agency. Mohammad Hossein Ohadi, a local official with the Iranian Red Crescent, said inhabitants were saved by the fact that most have been living in tents since a giant earthquake shook the region on May 10 killing around 1,600 people and flattening villages around the towns of Qayen and Birjand.

Iranian preacher urges trade boycott against U.S.

TEHRAN (AFP) — An influential prayer leader in Tehran called Friday for Islamic nations to launch a trade boycott against the United States because of a congressional resolution recognising Jerusalem as Israel's unified capital. "Islamic countries must avoid any trade with the United States while the Jerusalem issue is unclear and Washington does not abandon its support of Israel in this regard," said Ayatollah Ahmad Janati, an influential conservative and member of Iran's constitutional council.

King stresses backing peace camps, lifting siege on Iraq

LONDON (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein and British Prime Minister Tony Blair Thursday discussed bilateral relations, the Middle East peace process and obstacles facing it. King Hussein highlighted the important role Europe can play in pushing the peace process forward and putting it back on track to ensure the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. Mr. Blair said his country will play an active role in pushing the peace process forward when it assumes the leadership of the European Union (EU) next year. King Hussein also discussed with Mr. Blair the conditions of the Iraqi people, and stressed the need to put an end to their suffering, resulting from the ongoing economic siege.

King Hussein emphasised the need to maintain Iraq's unity and sovereignty in order to enable it play its full role in establishing regional security and stability. The audience was attended by Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh and Jordan's ambassador in London, Fuad Ayoub.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, King Hussein voiced hope that the peace camp will make its voice heard loud and will pursue the struggle for the attainment of a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

Stressing the need to overcome the present deadlock in Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, King Hussein said: "We have to confront all challenges standing in the path of a comprehensive peace and there must be a way out of the present deadlock in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations."

The King said that no single person or a minority group should be allowed to tamper with the fate of the majority of the people in the Middle East.

Responding to a question, King Hussein said the issue is not connected with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but rather is of concern to all the Israeli people, "where I believe exists a large group of people, who like us, belong to the peace camp."

The King said "time has come to hear that camp's voice which can positively affect those in responsible positions to act in the interest of the people and the future."

Queen Noor, who accompanied the King to the British prime minister's office at 10 Downing Street, met with Mrs. Blair and exchanged views with her on issues of mutual interest.



His Majesty King Hussein and British Prime Minister Tony Blair in 10 Downing, Thursday. The two leaders discussed the stalled peace process, sanctions against Iraq and bilateral relations

Netanyahu papers over cracks in own coalition

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu succeeded Friday in quelling a ministerial revolt over the promotion of right-wing hardliner Ariel Sharon to a direct role in peace talks with the Palestinians, but the 10-day crisis took a heavy toll on Mr. Netanyahu's popularity ratings which have sunk to an all-time low, according to two opinion polls published here.

Foreign Minister David Levy and Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai led the opposition to Mr. Sharon taking a seat alongside them in Mr. Netanyahu's inner security cabinet which also runs peace talks with the Arabs.

The pair, both moderates, argued that the appointment of the hawkish ex-general would aggravate the crisis in the peace process and increase Israel's international isolation.

However, Mr. Levy dropped his threats to resign Friday after receiving a pledge from Mr. Netanyahu that he would

remain officially in charge of talks with the Palestinians, aides said.

Mr. Mordechai also gave in after assurances he would maintain control of negotiations with the Syrians if and when they resume after a 16-month freeze.

Mr. Sharon demanded his new role as a condition for taking the job of finance minister following the forced resignation of Dan Meridor last week.

The end of the dispute allows Mr. Netanyahu to paper over the cracks in his coalition of religious and right-wing parties and announce as planned a government reshuffle next week.

But the 10 days of turmoil which followed Mr. Meridor's resignation, including mutterings from within Mr. Netanyahu's coalition about their leader's "autocratic" style, has made a serious dent in the prime minister's

(Continued on page 7)

Palestinian police foil another suicide attack

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian security forces, acting on a tip from Israeli police, have arrested a Palestinian who was planning a suicide bombing in Jerusalem's old city, the Israeli press said Friday.

Palestinian security received information on the would-be bomber from their Israeli counterparts and they arrested the unidentified 17-year-old Palestinian after he had already prepared the explosive, the daily Haaretz reported.

The Palestinian was part of a militant cell from the West Bank village of Deir Samet where the Israeli army detained 10 Hamas members and

confiscated weapons over the past six weeks, the paper said.

The paper did not specify when and where the arrest took place. Jibril Rajoub, head of Palestinian preventative security in the West Bank, told AFP he had no information on the arrest.

The teenager had intended to blow himself up near one of the Israeli army checkpoints in Jerusalem's old city, Haaretz said.

Amid a continuing three-month freeze in the peace process, Israel has pressured the Palestinians to cooperate more closely in suppressing radical groups involved in anti-Israeli attacks.

Spain blocks Jordan-EU accord over size of tomato paste quota

By Ghaila Ahul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Spain on Thursday blocked the partnership agreement initiated by Jordan and the European Union (EU) in protest against the size of the Kingdom's tomato paste quota. "This is not a problem between us (Jordan) and the EU. It is a problem between the EU and its members. And we hope the EU will find a solution soon," Ministry of Planning Secretary General Nabil Ammari told the Jordan Times Friday.

Under the agreement, initiated April on the sidelines of the Euro-Mediterranean conference in Malta, Jordan can export 3,900 tonnes of tomato paste to EU markets free of customs duties but with tariff quotas and a set timetable.

Spain, however, objected that the amount of tomato paste that Jordan can export under the accord is too large, according to Reuters.

An official source, who requested anonymity, told the Jordan Times that during the Euro-Mediterranean

conference in Malta a clause was added to the agreement allowing both Jordan and the EU to revise the variety and the quantity of produce that can be exported under the deal.

"As partners, both sides are allowed to re-discuss and revise the quantity of produce that can be exported," he said.

However, the source added, Spain has objected to the clause saying it posed a challenge to Spanish products.

The 15 European countries are expected to discuss the problem next week. But, the source said, if Spain does not reverse its decision, the EU will have to omit the clause from the agreement.

If Jordan refuses the omission of the clause, he added, the whole agreement could have to be renegotiated.

According to Reuters, both sides might have to renegotiate the accord, especially that Jordan has indicated that if the negotiations were to be formally reopened, it would seek changes on a range of

points. Dr. Ammari expressed Jordan's satisfaction with the articles of the agreement and said the country had to compromise on some issues in order to initial the accord.

He added that after Jordan has exhausted the quotas set by the agreement, the country hopes to increase the quotas and the variety of agricultural produce it can export to EU markets.

"I hope the agreement would allow us to increase the quotas and the variety of products we can export to EU countries," he said.

Dr. Ammari reiterated that the blocking of the partnership agreement is an EU problem "which should be solved internally."

Reuters quoted European diplomats, attending an EU foreign affairs ministers meeting in Luxembourg on Thursday, as saying that Spain's action was part of a growing muscle-flexing process ahead of changes in the EU's aid programme for its poorest members.

Annan says Israel continues building illegal settlements

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Secretary General Kofi Annan said on Thursday Israel had not abandoned its construction of a new settlement on occupied territory south of Jerusalem and that this was "viewed as particularly serious."

His comments were contained in a written report expected to be made public shortly.

It was requested by an emergency special session of the General Assembly in April which demanded the

immediate cessation of construction at the site, called Har Homa in Hebrew and Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arabic.

The assembly resolution, adopted by a vote of 134 to three with 11 abstentions, also demanded a halt to all other Israeli settlement activities and called for an end to all support for "illegal Israeli activities" in the occupied territories.

"According to the information available to the United Nations, the govern-

ment of Israel, as of June 20, 1997, has not abandoned its construction of a new Israeli settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim," Mr. Annan said.

Even before the report was issued, the Palestinian U.N. observer mission declared its intention of calling for the reconvening of the emergency assembly session.

Mr. Annan detailed exchanges which led him to

(Continued on page 7)

Turkish PM-designate gets boost

ANKARA (AFP) — Four deputies quit parties in Turkey's outgoing Islamist-led coalition Friday, boosting the chances of the rival conservative party leader Mesut Yilmaz of forming a new government.

Mr. Yilmaz was asked by President Suleiman Demirel a week ago to form a government after Premier Necmettin Erbakan resigned in the face of threats from the secular military to his year-old Islamist government. Mr. Yilmaz, who heads the Motherland Party, has been negotiating with other anti-Islamist parties on the formation of a new administration, but still commands the support of less than half the 550 members of parliament.

One deputy resigned from Mr. Erbakan's Welfare Party (Refah) Friday, while three

others said they were leaving the True Path Party (DYP) led by the outgoing Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller.

The defections leave Refah with 154 seats and the DYP with 110 seats in parliament, and strengthen Mr. Yilmaz's chances of surviving a vote of confidence.

Ms. Ciller, Mr. Erbakan and their ally Muhsein Yazicioglu, the leader of a small far-right party, have vigorously objected to the formation of a new government led by Mr. Yilmaz.

They claim Mr. Yilmaz will be defeated in a vote of confidence as, together, their three parties command a parliamentary majority.

However, the Refah-DYP coalition is increasingly strained, mainly due to the rising number of deputies aban-

doning Ms. Ciller's party.

Her party has been plagued by defections in the last year from members angry at Ms. Ciller's alliance with the Islamists.

Kubilay Uygur and Ismail Kose both defected from the DYP Friday to the extreme right-wing Nationalist Action Party. However, since the party attracted less than 10 per cent of the vote during elections in 1995, it is not represented in parliament.

Ferit Bora, who resigned from Refah, announced he would join the Party for a Democratic Turkey which supports Mr. Yilmaz in parliament.

The intentions of Erkan Kemaloglu, who also left the DYP Friday, are not yet known.

Israelis, Palestinians clash as Egypt starts new peace effort

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian youths clashed with Israeli soldiers in a new upsurge of violence in the divided West Bank town of Hebron on Friday as the impasse in the peace process entered its fourth month.

The renewed fighting came with warnings from Palestinians and Israelis that further widespread clashes could break out in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as Egyptian mediator Ossama Al Baz prepared to visit the region next week.

Mr. Baz will hold separate talks with the Palestinians and Israelis in an effort to get the

stalled peace talks rolling again, Egyptian ambassador to Israel, Mohammad Bassuni, said in Cairo, adding that exact dates had not yet been set.

In Hebron, around 50 youths pelted Israeli soldiers with rocks and Molotov cocktails at the border between the Israeli and Palestinian-controlled areas of the town, often a flashpoint for unrest.

Soldiers fired back with rubber-coated bullets and two Palestinians were slightly wounded but did not have to be taken to the hospital, witnesses said. One soldier was also lightly injured.

The melee died down around noon when many protesters left for the weekly Muslim prayers, witnesses said.

The troubles broke nearly a week of quiet in the town after the previous week saw fierce street fighting which left more than 170 Palestinians injured, most lightly, by rubber bullets.

A top Palestinian security official warned earlier this week that Palestinians were frustrated by the right-wing Israeli government's policies and the situation could "explode," a view that was echoed by an Israeli intelligence official in a briefing to

parliament.

On the diplomatic side, an Egyptian official said Cairo wants Israel to give an "encouraging response" to its plan for unlocking the deadlock in the peace process — which includes a freeze on settlement building — before Mr. Baz launches his new mission.

Despite several shuffles between Israeli and Palestinian leaders, Mr. Baz has failed to restart the peace talks, which ground to a halt in mid-March when Israel started work on a Jewish settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab east Jerusalem.

Israel attacks Hizbollah stronghold

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — Israeli helicopters fired missiles at a stronghold of the Iranian-backed Hizbollah in south Lebanon overnight, killing one guerrilla, security officials said Friday.

Two helicopters fired five missiles at a road through the Iqlim Al Toufah heights east of the port city of Sidon, the officials said, adding that one hit a car driven by a Hizbollah guerrilla. Hizbollah said later that the fighter had been killed.

In Jerusalem, an Israeli military spokesman said a team of paratroopers had carried out the overnight operation.

"A member of Hizbollah was killed and several others wounded" when paratroop-

ers fired on a car used by the Shiite Muslim fundamentalist group, the spokesman said.

Hizbollah retaliated by raining mortar shells on Israeli army positions at Sojoud and Jabal Rafih in the south Lebanon border zone occupied by Israel.

A Hizbollah statement said its fighters attacked Israeli forces with automatic weapons, anti-tank rockets and shells at dawn Friday.

Israeli troops in the occupied zone fired back with around 50 shells at the Iqlim Al Toufah heights and the eastern Bekaa Valley, Lebanese police said without reporting casualties.

Israeli aircraft have carried out 25 raids on south Lebanon since the start of the year, killing two Hizbollah guerrillas and wounding three.

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Saudi Arabia pledges backing for Lebanon

Crown Prince Abdullah calls for peace in Mideast

BEIRUT (AFP) — Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz pledged his country's backing for Lebanon as it recovers from its civil war, during the first visit here by a senior Saudi official since the conflict began in 1975, officials said Friday.

The crown prince, speaking late Thursday, declared Saudi Arabia's "moral, political and economic support" for Lebanon and said it "followed with interest the progress of its reconstruction" after the devastating 1975-1990 war.

Crown Prince Abdullah also called for peace in the Middle East, saying the failure of the peace process would have a negative fall-out for all sides.

"The world is tired of destruction and arms policies, all religions want peace," he said.

"Any attempt to avoid the commitments of peace will cause problems which will not spare any side," he said.

The Saudi prince arrived in Lebanon Thursday at the head of a 162-member delegation

which is to discuss economic accords with its Lebanese counterparts.

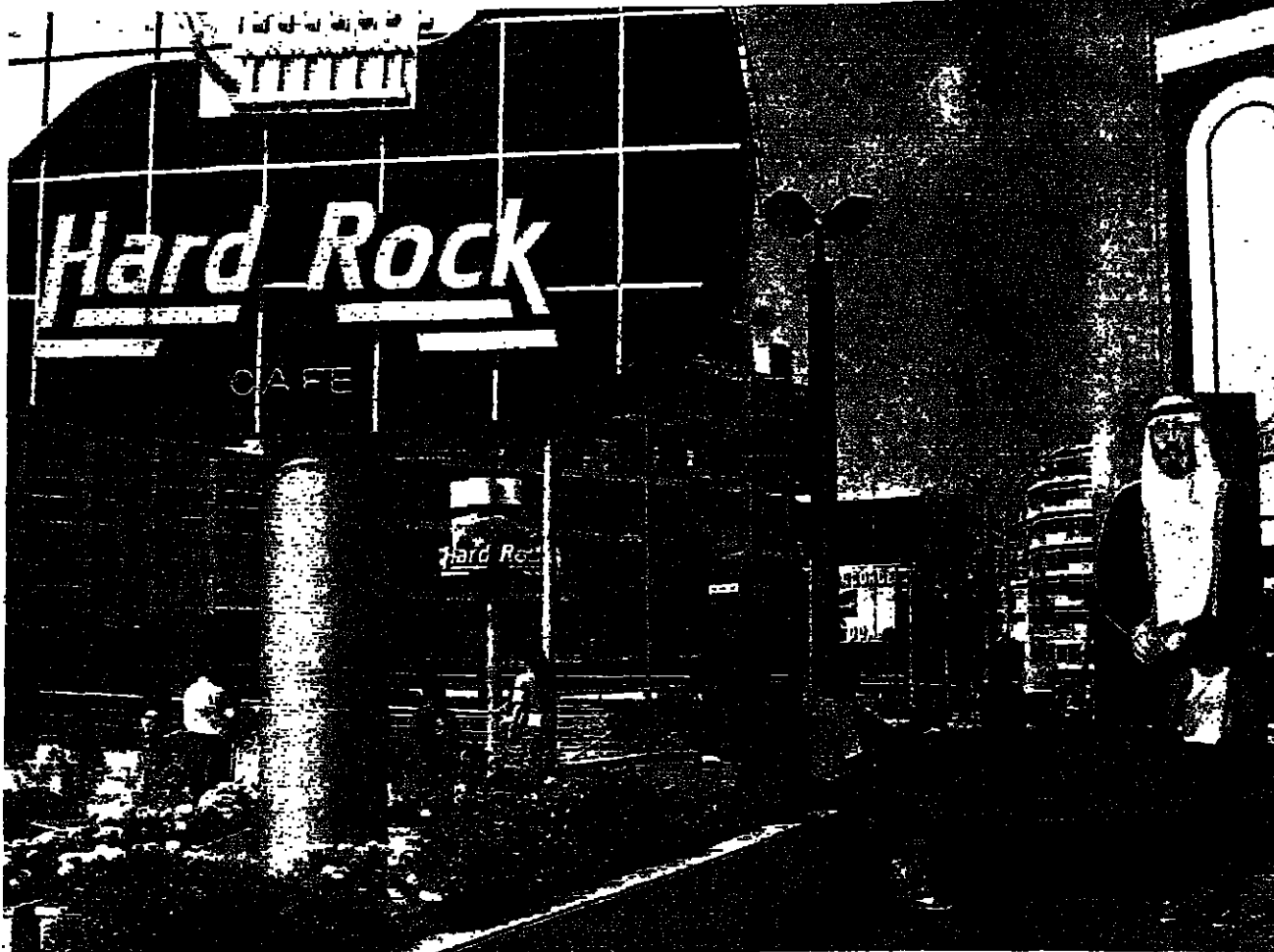
The prince held talks with Lebanese President Elias Hrawi late Thursday and is to meet Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and parliament speaker Nabih Berri Friday.

The Saudi government and the Saudi Development Fund (SDF) have granted \$100 million since 1993 to help finance Lebanon's \$18-billion rebuilding programme launched after the war.

The SDF has also granted soft loans totalling \$130 million while private Saudi investments in Lebanon have been estimated at \$1.5 billion.

Last year, Saudi Arabia's imports from Lebanon stood at \$139 million while its exports amounted to \$112 million.

Mr. Hariri Thursday described the crown prince's visit as "historic." He last visited Lebanon in 1975 while late King Faisal Ben Abdul Aziz made a trip to Lebanon in 1971.



A huge poster of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul-Aziz erected by Lebanese businessmen at the entrance of Beirut's Hard Rock square in Verdun Street on Friday (Reuters photo)

Jordan 'resolves' Muslim-Christian dispute in Jerusalem

AMMAN (AP) — Jordan said Friday that its mediation has resolved a dispute between Palestinian Christians and Muslims over one of Christianity's holiest shrines in Arab east Jerusalem.

Although Israel seized Arab east Jerusalem from Jordan in the 1967 Mideast war, Amman retains custody of holy shrines in that city, including the two involved in the dispute — Khaniqa Salahiya Mosque and the adjacent Church of Holy Sepulchre, where Christians believe Jesus was buried and resurrected.

A Jordanian delegation, dispatched by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, "succeeded in solving the problems amicably," Religious Affairs Minister Abdul Salam Abbadi said.

He refused to give details of a compromise if any.

The dispute had apparently remained alive until Thursday when the Palestinian religious affairs minister, Hassan Tabboub, said Jordanian mediation had failed.

Israel has a hands-off approach toward the shrines, but has allowed the Greek Orthodox church, made up mostly of Palestinian Christians, to use the site.

A dispute has the long-term potential of igniting tensions not only among Palestinians

but also of angering Christians elsewhere given the importance of the shrine.

The dispute comes amid rising tensions between the Palestinians and Israel over its refusal to stop constructing Jewish settlements in the traditionally Arab east Jerusalem, which had led to a freeze in peace talks. The Palestinians want Arab east Jerusalem as their future capital.

The intra-Palestinian argument began when Muslim clerics started unauthorised renovations of their two-story mosque in April. Greek Orthodox officials claimed the Muslims seized two of four dormitory rooms at the adjacent church and built bathrooms on the church's roof.

The Islamic Trust, or Waqf, which administers Muslim holy sites, acknowledges the renovations but denies church property is being harmed or annexed. Reporters who have toured the area say the new toilets do not appear to encroach on the roof of the church.

Mr. Abbadi denied a report in an Israeli newspaper, Haaretz, that Jordan proposed a compromise allowing the Waqf to keep the dormitory rooms of the church, and giving the Christians a church in Karak, 120 kilometres south of the Jordanian capital, Amman.

Rabin assassination dashed peace with Syria, Indyk says

The Jerusalem Post

U.S. AMBASSADOR Martin Indyk believes there was a real chance of peace between Israel and Syria on the eve of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, but it was dashed immediately afterwards by rapidly changing circumstances.

The American envoy, who was interviewed at the Tel Aviv embassy just after the White House announced that President Bill Clinton had nominated him for the post of Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs.

Referring to his assignment to Israel in March 1995, Mr. Indyk said, "I was sent here by President Clinton to work with the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin." Peace with Syria was their common objective, he said.

"The next step in the process was to achieve a breakthrough with Syria," he said, adding that the Oslo accords were "on track" at the time and that an Israeli-Syrian agreement would have made it easier for the Palestinians to move forward.

Former ambassador to the U.S., Itamar Rabinovich, described Mr. Indyk's remarks as "a precise rendition of the U.S. position."

He recalled, however, that when Syrian President Hafez Assad insisted that Mr. Rabin drop his demand for an early warning station in the Golan Heights, to be set up after

Israel's withdrawal, the embryonic agreement collapsed.

Mr. Rabinovich recalled working with the Australian-born diplomat when Mr. Indyk served as director of the National Security Council's Middle East desk as well as during his stint as envoy to Israel.

A senior U.S. official said yesterday that the Clinton administration hopes the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will hold its hearing on Mr. Indyk's nomination prior to its August break. But that might have to wait until the autumn, due to an overloaded Congressional calendar. If confirmed, Mr. Indyk would replace Robert Pelletreau, who retired earlier this year.

Mr. Indyk was enthusiastic about the post of assistant secretary.

"It will give me an opportunity to implement the Clinton administration's policies toward Iran and Iraq, as well as the Gulf states," he said.

"We have a strong strategic interest in seeing the peace process succeed," he said. "The President feels that we must get the peace process back on track and that more progress should be made towards new agreements."

He stressed that the process is based on the "land-for-peace" principle, with Israel giving up tangible assets and the Arabs promising intangible such as normalisation and open borders.

Aziz blames U.S. for serious environmental setback in Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz Thursday accused the U.S. of causing serious damage to Iraq's environment and a deterioration in its living standards.

In an address to a U.N. Earth summit Mr. Aziz referred to the Gulf war and Washington's determination to maintain sanctions against Baghdad.

"The deliberate acts of the U.S. which aimed at inflicting destruction on Iraq in 1991 and its insistence to maintain the iniquitous embargo have led to a serious setback of the environmental conditions in Iraq as well as to a serious deterioration in living standards," he said.

Mr. Aziz said a U.N. "oil-

for-food" agreement allowing Iraq to export \$2 billion worth of oil every six months to buy food and other necessities had not led to a tangible improvement.

"The agreement has not been implemented in fact due to the suspending of a large number of contracts for food, medicine and civilian needs by the American delegation in the sanctions committee," he said.

Even if fully implemented, the "oil-for-food" deal "would not lead to a serious improvement of the living and health conditions of the population because of the insufficiency of the funds generated by it and the high rate of deductions."

He was referring to the fact that 30 per cent of the pro-

ceeds of oil sales are earmarked for Gulf war reparations and lesser amounts used to pay for the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and meet other U.N. costs stemming from the war.

Mr. Aziz said scientific studies confirmed that, during the Gulf war, the U.S. "used depleted uranium shells in the military operations against Iraq."

He said this exposed "vast areas of Iraq to lethal contamination," resulting in congenital deformations, bone deformities, unexplained hair loss and skin diseases.

Mr. Aziz also said U.S. forces "blew up" after the ceasefire depots containing chemical weapons in the areas

under its occupation in southern Iraq in an irresponsible way. That in turn led to a chemical contamination covering populated areas."

Mr. Aziz said the bombardment of Iraqi power plants and other public utilities halted services providing drinking water, sewerage, irrigation and drainage.

"This led to depriving our citizens of the needed energy, thereby forcing them to cut down fires to use as a source of energy. Moreover, the bombardment of oil wells, other oil facilities and a large number of factories led to the leakage of large quantities of gases, fumes and chemical substances and other contaminating materials to the environment," he said.

Lebanese journalist faces jail for collaboration with Israel

BEIRUT (AFP) — A Lebanese journalist has been charged with collaborating with the "enemy" Israel and faces a prison sentence of between three and 15 years, judicial sources said Friday.

A military court ordered the trial of Tony Fouad Shamiye, who works for the private Lebanese Murr Television (MTV) station, to start in Beirut on September 3.

Mr. Shamiye, who is in

his 30s, was arrested two months ago on accusations of passing information to Israel on the Lebanese army and the Iranian-backed Hizbollah, which spearheads the guerrilla war to force Israel out of its self-declared "security zone" in south Lebanon.

He has also been charged with compiling video tapes on Hizbollah operations against Israeli troops and giving them to a go-between who passed them

on to Israeli intelligence agents.

Three members of the Lebanese army and two other men were arrested with him.

In a separate affair, a journalist from the leading Al Nahar newspaper, Pierre Attallah, is due to stand trial in October on accusations of "contacting agents hired by Israel." He faces a jail sentence of three years.

Iran hails Arab call for friendly ties

'Friendly ties with Iran will contribute to regional cooperation, security and peace'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran Friday hailed a call by Egypt, Syria and the six Gulf monarchies for friendlier ties with the Islamic republic, saying together they could take on Israel.

The call was made Thursday by the eight-nation Damascus Declaration, which said at the end of a meeting in Syria that it wanted to establish good relations with Iran.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi said "friendly relations with Iran will con-

tribute to the development of regional cooperation and security and peace in the Persian Gulf."

"With an end to the optimism of certain Arab countries on the subject of Israel, Islamic cooperation and solidarity to defend the rights of Palestinian Muslims and liberate occupied Arab land will be strengthened."

Mr. Mohammadi added, quoted by the official IRNA news agency.

However, he sounded a warning note over the

Damascus Declaration states support for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in a conflict with Iran over three strategic Gulf islands.

The member states — Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE — called on Iran to "end its occupation" of the islands.

Mr. Mohammadi said the islands were part of Iranian territory and "such claims weaken Islamic solidarity and strengthen Israel and foreign forces in the region."

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7:30 News Headline
7:35 Hanging with Mr. Cooper
8:00 Magazine Zero One
10:00 News in English
10:30 Tennis

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Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155

ARRIVALS

The Arab Centre for Heart and
Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikam Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272775
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)221111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport Tel.
(08)53200 where it should
always be verified. Information
on other flights is obtained on
telephone (08) 52700 or (08)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:45 Beirut (RJ)
09:40 Istanbul (RJ)
12:10 Dhahran (RJ)
12:40 Doha (add) (RJ)
12:20 Amsterdam.
Chicago (add) (RJ)
12:40 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
13:10 Paris (RJ)
13:15 Brussels, Amsterdam (RJ)
13:15 Cairo (RJ)
14:05 London (RJ)
21:10 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
21:20 Bombay (RJ)
21:25 Jeddah (RJ)
22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
Other Flights
04:00 Rome (AZ)
04:00 Athens (OA)
06:50 Larnaca (CY)
07:10 London (GA)
08:10 Damascus, London (BA)
14:00 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
16:30 Dubai (EK)
16:30 Doha (Q7)
20:10 London (GA)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:15 Cairo (MS)
23:25 Beirut (ME)
23:45 Amsterdam (KL)
02:15 London (BA)

03:00 Rome (AZ)

06:45 Beirut (RJ)
09:40 Istanbul (RJ)
12:10 Dhahran (RJ)
12:40 Doha (add) (RJ)
12:20 Amsterdam.
Chicago (add) (RJ)
12:40 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
13:10 Paris (RJ)
13:15 Brussels, Amsterdam (RJ)
13:15 Cairo (RJ)
14:05 London (RJ)
21:10 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
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20:10 London (GA)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:15 Cairo (MS)
23:25 Beirut (ME)
23:45 Amsterdam (KL)
02:15 London (BA)

Diauddin Rifai passes away

AMMAN (J.T.) — Diauddin Rifai, Jordanian writer and journalist, Friday passed away at the age of 72.

Rifai was born in Safad, Palestine on Dec. 13, 1925. He obtained a law degree from Damascus University, following which time he enrolled in Oxford University, obtaining a diploma in public administration.

Rifai assumed several senior government posts, including Ministry of Culture and Information under-secretary and director of the Jordan Broadcasting Corporation. He worked as a special



Diauddin Rifai
translator at the Royal Court and served in diplomatic missions in Spain,

Italy, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt and Turkey.

He was the first elected director general of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) and chairman of the Arab Standing Committee for Information.

He also served as director of the Arab League's information offices in Nigeria, Cameroon, and the Ivory Coast.

Rifai served as president of the Jordanian Writers Federation. He wrote a number of books and articles on politics and social criticism, in addition to newspaper articles.

Premier meets with ambassadors in Tunis

TUNIS (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Thursday night met with Arab ambassadors in Tunis to discuss developments in the Middle East peace process and Jordan's efforts to restart talks.

Dr. Majali, currently on a four-day visit to Tunisia, called for enhancing inter-Arab cooperation and exploring means to advance ties in all fields.

He described Jordan as intent on supporting any efforts to strengthen and promote inter-Arab relations.

The premier also held talks with his Tunisian counterpart Hamed Qarawi on bilateral cooperation, economy and trade and suggested the creation of a joint bank to promote trade exchanges. The Tunisian government responded positively to the proposal.

Dr. Majali, who arrived in Tunisia last Wednesday, told Dr. Qarawi that Jordan is eager to enhance political consultations with the North African country. He added that the Kingdom is interested in gaining

from Tunisian expertise in implementing development projects and encouraging businesspersons from both countries to initiate joint investments.

The premier stated that Jordan is particularly interested in benefiting from the Tunisian experience in tourism, traditional crafts and industries, and higher education.

Dr. Majali suggested that Jordan and Tunisia work towards an agreement regarding investment protection methods.

He outlined Jordan's general policies on encouraging investment in the Kingdom as well as incentives offered to foreign and Arab investors.

The prime minister then highlighted national plans to develop its tourism industry.

Dr. Majali met with Tunisian President Zein Al Abidine Ben Ali with whom he reviewed the current status of the Middle East peace process as well as ways the two might further promote bilateral ties.

ESCWA to cover population, food and the environment in workshop

AMMAN (Petra) — The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Friday announced that it would hold a workshop here on population policies and sustainable development, focusing on food and the environment.

The workshop will be held Wednesday and be attended by delegates from national population committees in 12 Arab countries, including Jordan.

An ESCWA statement described the event as part

of ESCWA's drive to support population policies in Arab countries in line with the objectives of the principles as decreed by the Amman Conference on Population and Development of 1993 and the United Nations-sponsored Cairo International Population Conference of 1994.

According to the statement, the workshop is designed to upgrade the skill and efficiency of those employed by national population committees and related institutions in the

Arab World.

Participants will benefit from modern trends in planning, executing, coordinating, evaluating and analysing policies and programmes pertaining to population, agriculture, food, the environment and sustainable development, according to ESCWA.

Participating in the meeting will be representatives from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Tunisia, Iraq, Oman and Syria.

Committee formed to supervise water, sewage network transfer

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A six-person committee was formed last week to supervise the transfer of water distribution and sewage network maintenance in Amman from the Water Authority (WA) to the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM), Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi affirmed Friday.

Dr. Abbadi said that sub-committees, including legal advisors and technicians, have been formed to discuss necessary steps.

"The transfer is limited to the jurisdiction of the GAM," Dr. Abbadi explained.

Water distribution in other municipalities and governorates in the Kingdom will remain in the hands of the WA, he added.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Dr. Abbadi justified the government decision regarding water and sewage as due to "the government's confidence that the GAM would be

more efficient in distributing water and maintaining sewage networks in the capital."

The transfer of WA responsibilities in Amman to the GAM hinges upon "a temporary law or at least until the next Parliament is elected and opens its session to discuss the matter," he added. "Parliamentary approval is obligatory."

Among the issues that the committee will discuss is the WA's JD 10 million debt.

"These are debts which the WA has not collected from ministries and other public institutions," he asserted. "This issue should be settled before the GAM assumes water and sewage responsibility in Amman."

Dr. Abbadi said that the present staff of the WA will be incorporated into the GAM "when a final decision is taken regarding the water distribution transfer."

A new department is slated for establishment within the GAM to replace the WA in the capital.

"By the end of this year, the responsibility of water distribution and sewage network maintenance will be part of the GAM," he affirmed.

According to the municipality plan, the GAM will collect water revenues, ensure water distribution, maintain the water network and take steps to prevent water leakage in the capital.

Ministry of Water and Irrigation figures indicate that 55 per cent of all water wastage is attributable to water leaks and "water theft" in Amman. The WA is only able to cover 85 per cent of the expense of water pumping in Amman, while the remaining 15 per cent is met through borrowing from private and public institutions.

Water and Irrigation Minister Munther Hadadin confirmed that Jordan is allocating JD 200 million to renew water and sewage networks in Jordan.

Foreign donors will provide much of the funding, he concluded.

Smuggled contraception cause for concern

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Family planning associations, doctors and contraception marketers are warning women about the risks of using intra-uterine devices (IUDs) smuggled into the Kingdom from neighbouring countries and extensively utilised by doctors and clinics.

"The smuggled IUDs have not undergone Ministry of Health sterility checks, do not bear a date of expiration and, it is uncertain as to where exactly they have been stored," said Ramzi Khoury, general manager at Med.I.C.A., a

major importer and distributor of contraception in the Kingdom.

"If an IUD is not sterilised, it can cause serious infection," gynaecologist Nabil Amman added. "And if the infection is not detected early, it could lead to a blockage of the tubes and even sterility."

According to pharmacist Bader Rashid, project manager at the Jordan Birth Spacing Project (JBSP), IUD smugglers started appearing in clinics and hospitals "late last year."

"Doctors told us that they show up regularly at clinics and studios, carrying the devices in big plastic bags," Mr. Rashid told the Jordan

Times. The sellers will not accept checks, but ask for cash payments, and "the same seller will not reappear twice in the same clinic," he explained.

While the prices of the three approved brands of IUDs regularly imported in Jordan float at around JD 3, the smuggled ones, Copper T, can be purchased for "around 500 fils," one gynaecologist said.

Though the origin of the smuggled IUDs is as yet unclear, many believe that they come from neighbouring countries, mainly Egypt, where they are stolen from stocks donated by international agencies,

such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

"We have discussed this issue of serious concern with the Ministry of Health and Medical Care as well as with donor agencies in order to coordinate and resolve this issue," said Mr. Rashid.

However, no action has heretofore been taken, and although every gynaecologist contacted by the Jordan Times denied ever buying IUDs "from the street," Mr. Khoury asserted that, since the smugglers began their rounds, his "IUD sales are zero."

"Though I concluded a deal to import Class A Copper Ts at a reduced price from India, I cannot sell them, because clinics and doctors are still buying from smugglers," Mr. Khoury said, urging the ministry of Health and Medical Care to "send inspectors to clinics to check invoices."

According to JBSP-commissioned research, 40 per cent of married women in Jordan are currently using some method of contraception, and 26.9 per cent are using modern methods, (oral contraception, IUDs, and Depo-Provera injections).

300 Palestinians to be accepted in public universities in Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — A total of 300 Palestinian students will be accepted in public universities in the Kingdom, Director of Education at the Palestinian Affairs Department Mohammed Yousef Omar said Thursday.

Mr. Omar, who headed the Jordanian delegation to a meeting held at the Arab League Headquarters in Cairo, said Jordan pledged the university seats at the conclusion of the 36th session of the Council of Educational Affairs for Palestinian Students.

In his address, Mr. Omar said Jordanian universities and community colleges accepted 5,491 Palestinian students for the academic year 1996/1997, including 1,196 students in state universities, 3,506 in private universities, 579 in community colleges, and 210 students in higher studies faculties.

At the Cairo meeting, the Jordanian delegation presented a report outlining the country's contribution to the education of Palestinian students.

According to the report, the Kingdom spends more than an annual \$300 million to provide educational and other services to Palestinian refugees. It said the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) provides basic education to Palestinian refugees, while the government takes care of the educational needs of students in the secondary stage as well as those living in areas where no UNRWA schools exist.

The meeting, attended by representatives of Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon as well as the Organisation of Islamic Conference and the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO), ended with a call on the Arab League General Secretariat to pursue contacts with Arab states to implement an Arab League resolution passed April 9.

This resolution stipulated the allocation of \$20 million to meet the educational needs of students in the Palestinian territories, particularly Jerusalem.

Dakamseh denies reports of deviant sexual behaviour

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — During the prosecution's Thursday examination of Corporal Ahmad Dakamseh, the Jordanian soldier charged with fatally shooting seven Israeli schoolgirls on March 13, the defendant denied detailing his sexual behaviour to a court-appointed psychologist.

Cpl. Dakamseh, who was questioned by Military Prosecutor Muhammad Hajar, described a psychology expert witness' testimony Wednesday, in which she asserted that he was engaged in "bestiality, paedophilia and homosexuality" as untrue.

"[Major Sayiegh's] report is false and meant to tarnish my image and reputation, and I refuse to tell a woman anything about my sexual life," Cpl. Dakamseh said.

Prosecutor Hajar then asked the defendant: "What if I tell you that your interview with the expert was videotaped? Would you still deny saying these things?"

Cpl. Dakamseh answered in the affirmative, challenging the prosecution to "show the video tapes to the courtroom — I did not say those things."

Prosecutor Hajar petitioned the court to present the videotapes and the court accepted his request stating that "the tapes will be presented in future court sessions."

Maj. Sayiegh, one of two psychology experts who examined the witness upon the court's request, testified Wednesday that the defendant had previously attempted to take his own life, was possessed of irresponsible and abrupt behaviour patterns, and suffers from an anti-social personality disorder.

During the examination, Prosecutor Hajar questioned the defendant as to his decision not to shoot Israelis previously visiting the area whose dog allegedly responded to the name "Mohammad."

"As you are a Muslim, and you said that naming a dog Mohammad is as offensive as the alleged gestures and provocation of the Israeli schoolgirls on the morning of the incident; why didn't you shoot the group with the dog?" Prosecutor Hajar queried. "Who is more important to you, yourself or our Prophet Mohammad?"

Cpl. Dakamseh responded that he did not know why he did not shoot the other Israelis. He also reiterated that he did not remember anything on the morning of the incident other than being provoked by the Israeli schoolgirls, grabbing his M16 rifle and finding himself in a Shuneh military office.

In response to a question posed by Atty. Hajar, the defendant described his confessions, registered in the charge sheet as plotting

to kill Israelis, as possibly accurate "but when questioned, I felt as though I was under the influence of [sleeping pills]."

Cpl. Dakamseh's trial is to resume today and the court is expected to hear 14 witnesses including those family members and colleagues who were subpoenaed upon the request of Defence Attorney Hussein Mjalli.

The court also rejected Attorney Mjalli's request to summon Mohammad Rasoul Keilani, former advisor to His Majesty King Hussein and former director of the General Intelligence Department (GID), who was assigned by the King on March 14 to investigate the shooting incident.

Atty. Hussein Mjalli repeatedly contested the court's refusal to subpoena Mr. Keilani, stating that as "the King assigned [Mr. Keilani] to investigate the incident, it is the court's right to hear him."

The issue concerned was a private assignment from His Majesty to Mr. Keilani, and has no bearing on the case as a criminal charge," Presiding Judge Brigadier General Ma'moun Khawneh ruled.

Eleven more witnesses, including Cpl. Dakamseh's superior as well as psychiatric experts, will testify for the defence in upcoming court sessions.

Men declare themselves innocent of rape charges

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Three men, including a prominent Jordanian singer, Thursday declared themselves innocent of charges of rape and statutory rape in the opening session of their trial.

The three are charged with having had sexual relations with a 17-year-old adolescent on April 9 and 10 of this year.

One of the three men, identified only as J.A., is charged with rape, while the other two, T.N. and the singer, U.J., are charged with engaging in sexual relations with a minor.

The minor's father, I.J., testified in court that upon his daughter's return home, she informed him that one of the men, T.N., "did not have relations with her."

"My daughter informed me that she told police that the singer," he said.

According to the charge sheet, the minor, who is from the West Bank, was

staying in the Marj Al Hamam neighbourhood of Amman in April, fought with family members and left the house.

She became depressed, wandered in streets and finally signalled to a car to pull over and take her to her friend's house, the charge sheet said.

A car pulled over, and the driver, the first defendant, J.A., offered her a ride, but on the way stated that he felt that she was depressed and convinced her to spend the night at his farm, and she accepted.

The transcripts said that J.A. then offered the adolescent orange juice with alcohol and "had relations with her while she was under the influence of the alcohol."

The following morning, according to various testimonies, the two had lunch and then at night, J.A. escorted her to a night club where she met with the singer and T.N.

"After spending some time at the club, the singer

and T.N. left the club with the minor and headed to T.N.'s house where they had sexual relations with the minor," according to the transcripts.

According to Defence Attorney Ahmad Najdawi, the minor, who was scheduled to testify Thursday, failed to appear.

"Her father informed us that she was sick but would appear for the next court session," Attorney Najdawi told the Jordan Times.

The minor has dropped charges against the three men, but according to the Jordanian Penal Code, they must still undergo a public trial.

They face a minimum sentence of five years imprisonment with hard labour.

The court tribunal, headed by Justices Abdul Ruhman Tawfiq, Mifleh Mubeidin and Ismael Hnoui, postponed the case for July 8, to hear the testimony of additional witnesses including that of the victim.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FRENCH-ARAB FILM FESTIVAL

* "Le mal" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by Nassim Al Naser at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Marwan, until July 30.

* Paintings by contemporary Iraqi artists entitled "Ecology and Environment in Iraqi Art" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, until July 12 (except Tuesdays).

* Spring Exhibition of Plastic Art '97 at Greater Amman Municipality, Ras Al 'Ain, until June 30.

* "Contemporary Arab Artists Exhibition," shows work of 60 Arab artists, until July 24 at Darat Al Funun, Jabel Weibdeh.

* "Biyoot Mij Al Salt" shows works by Mohammad Jalous at Al Taqadom Association-Daboun, Al Hummar, until June 30.

Jordan Times facsimile #696183

Clinton fails to deliver concrete promises on global warming

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton, ignoring pressure from world leaders at the Earth Summit, failed Thursday to commit the United States to concrete limits on capping "greenhouse gases."

In a speech to the Earth Summit here, the U.S. president announced a series of initiatives including one billion dollars in aid over five years to developing countries to help curb the gases blamed for global warming.

He also promised the installation of one million solar power units in the United States by 2010 and a halt to projects in virgin tropical forests or other fragile areas which are funded by the government's Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

In addition, the president challenged U.S. scientists to develop breakthrough technologies for addressing climate change, which is one of the top concerns at the U.N. summit assessing progress since the 1992 Rio Conference.

Mr. Clinton admitted that the United States was the world's leading producer of carbon dioxide, producing

20 per cent of its greenhouse gases with only four per cent of the population.

"Frankly, our record since Rio is not sufficient... We must do better and we will," he said.

Environmental organisations immediately complained that Mr. Clinton was failing to show global leadership at a time when his European colleagues are committed to capping carbon dioxide emissions by 15 per cent on 1990 levels before 2010.

Mr. Clinton said he "applauded the European Union for its strong focus on the issue" but again refused to yield to European requests reiterated during the summit here that he commit to specific targets and deadlines.

A conference in Kyoto is due to adopt global legally-binding limits, and Mr. Clinton promised that "we will bring to the Kyoto conference in December a strong American commitment to realistic and binding limits that will significantly reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases."

But Mr. Clinton explained that he first had to "convince the American

people and Congress that the climate change problem is real and imminent."

He also stressed that a shift to new technologies might provide more appropriate measures to combat global warming.

But the environmentalists accused the president of bowing to the oil industry, and were sceptical that he would deliver on concrete caps.

Friends of the Earth Director Kevin Dunion told a news conference here: "I cannot believe that the Americans will arrive at Kyoto with strong, binding commitments, and give a lead."

"President Bill Clinton missed an important opportunity today," said Kelly Sims, with Ozone Action. "Without international leadership the United States is abdicating its responsibility to protect the world from dangerous global warming as the largest emitter of greenhouse gases."

Concerning the other initiatives mentioned by Mr. Clinton, initial reactions from delegations at the summit were equally cool.

Christian Brodhag, the

head of the French Council on Sustainable Development, noted that the billion dollars earmarked for developing countries was "not even as much as the \$1.3 billion owed to the United Nations by the United States."

The Group of 77, which includes 132 countries, in speeches to the Earth Summit this week systematically attacked the North's failure to meet its Rio commitments, particularly a promise to transfer finances and technological resources to the South to help "green" their economies.

Nigerian Minister of State for Works and Housing Alhaji Abdullahi Adamu commented in his speech Thursday that the political will no longer existed among the leading industrialised nations for the environmental protection agenda laid out in Rio.

"As we are well aware, five years after the Rio conference, international cooperation has waned and the political will to implement Agenda 21 has continued to recede, especially on the part of our partners in the developed world."

N. Ireland police escape suspected IRA ambush

BELFAST (R) — Suspected IRA guerrillas launched a rocket attack on a police patrol in north Belfast Thursday night but the officers escaped injury, Northern Ireland security sources said Friday.

A hijacked car believed to have been used by the attackers was found on fire in the nearby Republican New Lodge District minutes afterwards, the sources said.

Police said an armoured police Land Rover van had slowed down near a school when the missile was fired at it just before midnight.

"The projectile missed the Land Rover and struck a corner wall of the school. No member of the Land Rover crew was injured and there are no reports at this stage of anyone else having been hurt," a Royal Ulster Constabulary spokesman said.

No group claimed responsibility, but security sources said the weapon was a type often used by Irish Republican Army (IRA) guerrillas who have waged a long war against British rule.

British security forces had been on alert for IRA attacks after two police officers were shot dead in Lur-

gan Town on June 16. On Wednesday police foiled a guerrilla plan for a gun attack on a security patrol in south Belfast.

The rocket was fired in a flashpoint zone where tension has been high for months between Catholic Nationalists and Protestant Loyalists.

Just 36 hours earlier, British Prime Minister Tony Blair launched an initiative to bring peace to the province where the IRA and their pro-British Protestant foes have stepped up hostilities in recent months.

Later Friday British-sponsored "proximity talks" were due to be held near Belfast to try and broker an agreement between Protestant marchers and Catholic objectors about a contentious parade due on July 6 in the town of Portadown.

Controversy about the annual pro-British "Marching Season" has fuelled fears of sectarian clashes across the province.

David Brown, a Belfast councillor for the Protestant Ulster Unionist Party, told BBC Radio: "That (attack) doesn't send a great message... the IRA have no interest in peace, they are

only interested in murdering people."

Ken Maginnis, a member of parliament for the biggest Protestant party, the Ulster Unionists, said his party had no wish to torpedo Mr. Blair's initiative.

But he added: "If the initiative is as shallow and as hollow as it appears it is going to be made by Sinn Fein/IRA then how on Earth can you expect us to be serious about it."

In a statement to parliament Wednesday, Mr. Blair detailed Anglo-Irish proposals for defusing a long-running wrangle about how IRA armaments will be scrapped if the guerrillas call a cessation of violence.

He also said full-scale talks on the province's future would start in mid-September regardless of whether Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, was at them.

Mr. Blair disclosed that three days before the Lurgan murders, Britain told Sinn Fein that it could get into talks six weeks after the IRA called an unequivocal ceasefire.

London and Dublin say that the IRA must abandon violence before Sinn Fein can be given a seat at talks.

Several wounded by gunfire at Albania poll rally

TIRANA (R) — Several people have been wounded by gunfire during a rally held by Albanian President Sali Berisha as an upsurge of violence hit the Balkan state, three days before a general election.

Foreign journalists who attended Thursday's rally in Lushnje, about 80 kilometres south of the capital Tirana, said shooting broke out near the town hall where Mr. Berisha was addressing a crowd of several hundred.

One journalist said she saw at least eight people with injuries in the town hospital.

Fresh violence between rival gangs has also erupted in the past few days in the Adriatic port of Vlore, focal point of a rebellion sparked earlier this year by the collapse of shady investment schemes in which many Albanians had invested.

About 1,500 people have been killed since the rebellion broke out. Troops of the 7,000-strong multinational force dispatched to Albania last month restored order in Vlore Thursday by moving through the town with armoured vehicles.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is supervising Sunday's snap election. Hundreds of international observers were due to travel across the country Friday to prepare to monitor the voting.

Mr. Berisha is not seeking reelection. But he has been campaigning hard to retain the big majority his Democratic Party won last year against a challenge by the Socialists, reformed heirs to Albania's former ruling hardline Communist Party.

In Lushnje, journalists said gunfire was heard at a distance behind the crowd five minutes after the president began his address. The president's bodyguards returned fire but it was not clear how the people were wounded.

Mr. Berisha left Lushnje and went on to other rallies in the town of Kavaje and the port of Durres.

Both Mr. Berisha's Democrats and the Socialists under economist Fatos Nano have scheduled rallies in Tirana's Skanderbeg Square at different times Friday, the final day of campaigning.

The election is seen by the international community as the only way to restore stability in Albania.



A Sri Lankan army battle tank roars into action somewhere in the northern rebel stronghold of Wanni as troops remain poised to take complete control of another rebel-held town. A military offensive against the rebels has been slowed by two daring rebel attacks in two weeks (Reuters photo)

Fresh fighting erupts in Sri Lanka; troops count the dead

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil Tiger guerrillas launched fresh long-range attacks against security forces to pin down troops counting their losses after a ferocious counter-offensive, official sources said Friday.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fired mortar bombs at troops in the small village of Periyamadu overnight Thursday even as soldiers were recovering from a major Tiger attack the previous day.

At least eight soldiers were seriously wounded in the latest attack which came hot on the heels of Wednesday's massive offensive at Periyamadu where both sides lost 251 combatants according to the Defence Ministry.

The Defence Ministry said 64 soldiers and 150 Tiger rebels were killed in the main fighting Wednesday while another seven troopers and 30 Tigers died in another confrontation in the same area.

However, official sources said that 75 soldiers were

killed. The Tigers said they killed "more than 100" government soldiers and wounded another 200 and placed their own losses at 85 killed.

The Defence Ministry Friday released pictures of soldiers at Periyamadu digging trenches as part of their defences in the drive to capture a key highway in the north of the country.

The LTTE in a statement from its London office said security forces fired artillery shells and kept up air attacks against the town of Puliyanakulam, further north of Periyamadu, after Wednesday's rebel onslaught on troops.

The rebels also accused the government of halting the supply of food to civilians in Tiger-held areas of the country's north, a charge denied by the authorities.

Tamil sources in the northern government-held town of Vavuniya said that thousands of Tamil civilians along the path that the army intends to take have begun fleeing their homes.

Security forces were closing in on the town of

Puliyanakulam when the Tigers mounted the ferocious counterattack Wednesday.

Military spokesman Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe told reporters here Thursday that they will push ahead despite the setbacks. Only two weeks earlier, the Tigers staged a similar devastating assault against the army.

"Tigers are desperate and are trying hard to stop our advance," Brigadier Munasinghe told reporters at the first military briefing since security forces mounted their latest drive on May 13.

The current army operation code named Sure Of Victory is aimed at capturing the main road to the Jaffna Peninsula through rebel-held territory but it has so far seen only resistance from the Tigers.

The Tiger guerrillas are campaigning for independence in the island's north and east. More than 50,000 people have been killed in the separatist conflict in the past 25 years.

Indian monsoon floods toll hits 132

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Rivers swollen by torrential rains flooded fresh areas in the western Indian state of Gujarat Friday, pushing the death toll from monsoon floods to 132, officials said.

The latest casualties included seven passengers of a luxury bus which was swept away by flood waters near Lolia village Thursday, the news agency said.

The dead included two women and four children. The other passengers were

rescued by villagers.

Indian troops continued to carry out relief and rescue operations across the coastal state, which has been lashed by heavy monsoon rains since the start of this month.

Flash floods inundated new villages Friday, rendering hundreds of poor people homeless. The floods have caused large-scale destruction to public as well as private property and crippled rail and road transport.

The monsoon rains hit the south of India in the first week of June and were gradually moving up the country. They are due to reach New Delhi in the first week of July.

The northeastern state of Assam is also suffering heavy rains which have claimed a handful of lives while about 10 slum-dwellers died in Bombay to the west after their homes were buried by mudslides.

EU starts enlargement process under cloud of fudged treaty

AMSTERDAM (AFP) — The European Union (EU) Friday took the first step on what promises to be a long and complicated process of enlargement by holding talks with 12 candidates for membership on the outcome of last week's Amsterdam summit.

The summit concluded two years of negotiations on EU internal reform that were intended to ensure the 15-nation bloc can still function when it expands to 20 or more.

But key institutional questions were left unresolved in the new EU treaty agreed at Amsterdam, clouding the prospects for early integration of the new democracies of Eastern Europe and Cyprus.

Before any new members are taken in, the EU will first have to conclude a new round of negotiations on the balance of power between its big and small states.

Even European Commission President Jacques Santer has admitted that the summit produced a "mediocre" result which does not augur well for enlargement.

Under its current timetable, the EU is committed to starting membership negotiations with Cyprus and some or all of the ten Eastern European candidates early next year.

The most optimistic estimates have suggested that the first new members could be brought in around 2002.

Which of the new democracies will be in the first wave will depend, in large part, on the European Commission's assessment of their readiness, due to be published in mid-July.

Turkey was also at Friday's talks, but unlike for the other 11 states, the EU has yet to commit itself to the goal of bringing it in.

Jan Zahradil, an advisor to Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus, said he did not think the Amsterdam fudge would delay the start of negotiations but admitted it could delay their conclusion.

"It could complicate the whole thing a little bit," he told AFP.

The Czech Republic is widely seen as one

of the leading contenders for early EU membership — its status reflecting both the strong progress it has made in adapting to a democratic, market economy and its strategic position.

"We have yet to hear anything that would suggest we would not be in the first wave," said Mr. Zahradil. Czech confidence is reflected in the fact that it plans to name the Foreign Ministry official who will head the negotiating team in September.

Germany's desire to secure its eastern border also plays strongly in favour of Poland, although its progress towards meeting EU standards has been slower than its Czech and Hungarian neighbours.

Slovenia, whose case for early membership is strongly supported by Italy, and Estonia, backed by the Scandinavian EU states, are also well placed. Both countries are close to the top of the list in terms of progress on reform.

Although Cyprus has been promised an early start to negotiations, a number of EU countries have made it clear there is no question of the island coming in before the conflict between its Greek and Turkish communities is definitively resolved.

Cypriot Prime Minister Glafcos Clerides said the prospect of membership had opened a "unique window of opportunity" to find a lasting solution to the divided island's problems.

Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller called for Turkey to be included in the membership negotiations from the start.

As a long-standing NATO ally and the only candidate to have entered into a customs union with the EU, Turkey had the right to expect a positive signal that would strengthen the hand of pro-democracy reformers, she said.

Acknowledging that Turkey had more to do to meet EU standards on political freedoms, Ms. Ciller said: "The perspective of accession in the foreseeable future would increase the motivation of those who support these reforms."

Former Pol Pot aide: Cambodia should not dwell on past

PAILIN (R) — Ieng Sary, foreign minister during the Khmer Rouge "killing fields" reign of terror, said Cambodia should not dwell on its troubled past and rejected calls for an international tribunal to try ailing rebel leader Pol Pot.

"If we keep talking about the past... every Cambodian leader has his own past... then we can never be united and develop our country," said Mr. Ieng Sary, who was sentenced in absentia with Mr. Pol Pot for his crimes during the 1975-79 Maoist regime.

He was pardoned late last year after he broke away from the guerrillas and promised to work for national reconciliation.

Cambodia is seeing a resurgence of political violence exacerbated by the reported capture of Mr. Pol Pot, under whose rule more than a million Cambodians are estimated to have died through torture, execution, disease or hard labour in vast agricultural camps.

"If the Cambodian people wanted Pol Pot to be brought before a court, the trial should be held in Cambodia without foreign involvement," Mr. Ieng Sary told Reuters.

"It is up to the people. If they say Pol Pot should be tried, then the trial should be in Cambodia, in our country. No outsider should interfere in this," he said.

He was speaking late Thursday in Pailin, the former headquarters of the now-disintegrating Khmer Rouge in the gem- and timber-rich jungle near Cambodia's western border with Thailand.

He predicted that Mr. Pol Pot, who was last seen in public in 1979 and who he said was seriously ill and being given oxygen, may die or mysteriously vanish. "It is possible that he will mysteriously disappear," he said.

International and Cambodian demands have grown for Mr. Pol Pot to be tried for his crimes against humanity.

Cambodia's two prime ministers said Saturday that Mr. Pol Pot had been captured by a breakaway Khmer Rouge faction. In a rare display of public unity the two premiers sent a letter to the United Nations seeking help in bringing to justice those responsible for crimes committed from 1975-79.

The United States later said it would help Cambodia extradite Mr. Pol Pot and asked Canada to consider using a Canadian law against genocide to facilitate the process.

Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk said Mr. Pol Pot could be tried in a Cambodian court if an international tribunal could not be arranged.

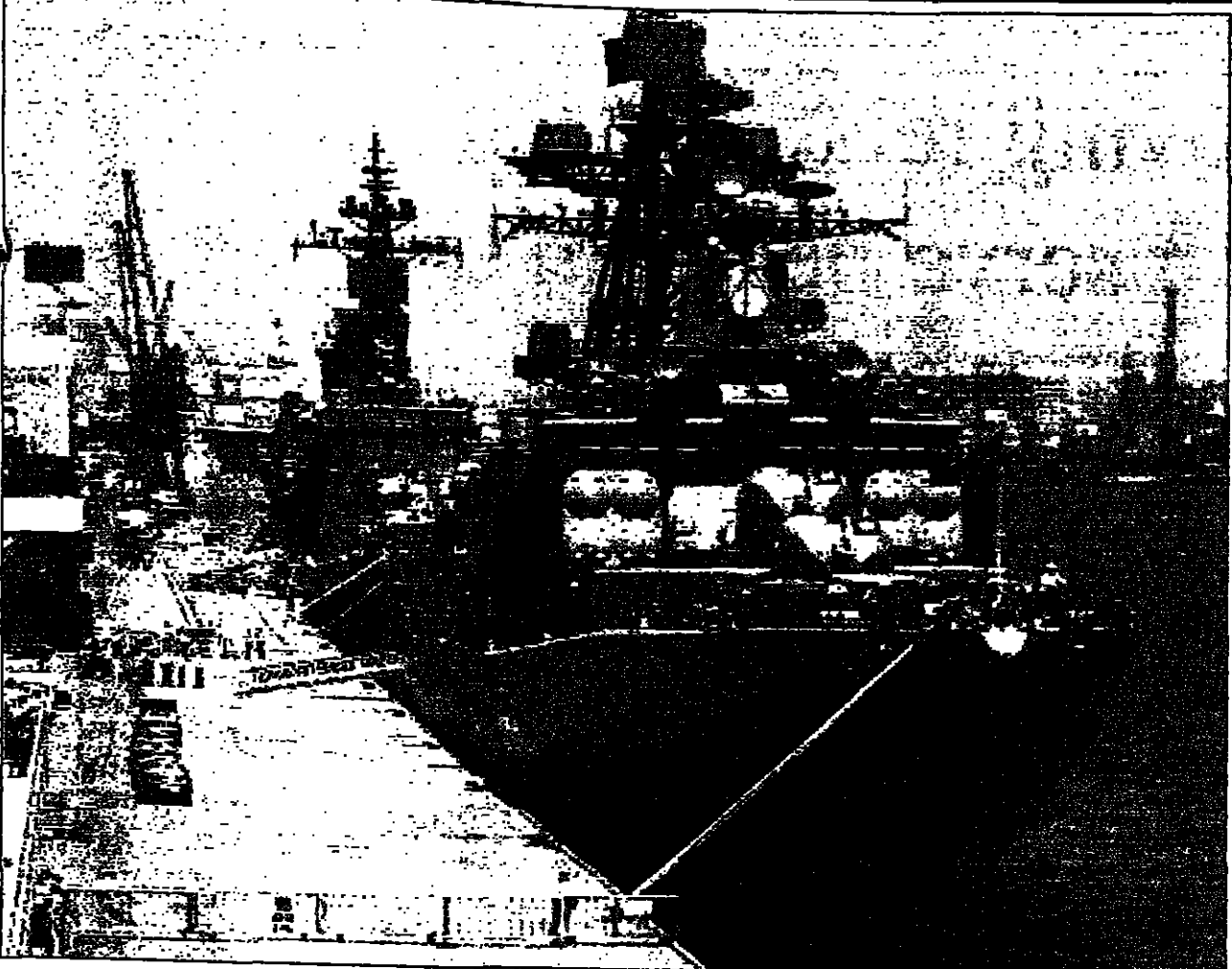
Mr. Ieng Sary, 74, who once trekked alongside Mr. Pol Pot through the jungle, now heads the Democratic National United Movement (DNUM) which he founded after breaking away from his former comrades with some 4,000 followers last year.

He said Mr. Pol Pot was being held by Ta Mok, the one-legged Khmer Rouge army commander.

"Even though they are in conflict, Ta Mok does not want to kill him or send him to face trial," Mr. Ieng Sary said.

He appeared to confirm reports by First Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh that Mr. Pol Pot slaughtered his Defence Chief Son Sen and 11 of his family members last month at northern Anlong Veng, then fled his base and was captured by the Ta Mok group.

"I want to tell three truths, one is that Pol Pot ordered to kill Son Sen and his family, two, Pol Pot has been in conflict with Ta Mok and three Pol Pot is badly ill, he is surviving on oxygen," Mr. Ieng Sary said.



The Russian destroyer Admiral Vinogradov berths at Tokyo's Harumi Pier Friday, the first Russian warship to pay a port call in Japan in more than 100 years. The 7,600-tonne destroyer of the Russian Pacific Fleet will stay in Japan for four days (Reuters photo)

First Russian warship in 100 years visits Tokyo

TOKYO (R) — The first Russian warship to visit Japan in more than 100 years berthed at a Tokyo pier Friday and senior officers from both sides said more military exchanges were needed to improve long-troubled bilateral ties.

The 8,500-tonne destroyer Admiral Vinogradov was the first Russian Navy ship to pay a courtesy call at a Japanese port since 1894 when a warship of the Tsar's navy visited Tokyo on the occasion of Emperor Meiji's 25th wedding anniversary.

"The officers and sailors of our navy and the Maritime Self-Defence Force (Japanese navy) have long stared at each other from a distance," Vice-Admiral Valery Chirov, deputy chief of the Russian Pacific Fleet, told a welcoming ceremony.

"But this is the first time in over a hundred years that we have invited each other's ships. From now on, we must exchange such visits every other year," Adm. Chirov said.

The Admiral Vinogradov's visit comes just a day after Moscow formally informed Tokyo that its nuclear missiles no longer targeted Japanese cities, but also one day after Japan was reminded of its cold war past with Russia.

On Thursday, Japan lodged a protest with Russia after a Russian patrol boat opened fire at a Japanese trawler in waters near disputed islands, called the Northern Territories by Japan and the Southern Kuriles by Russia.

Two Japanese fishermen were wounded, one seriously, the Japanese Coast

Guard said.

The row over the islands, seized by the Soviet army in the last days of World War II, has prevented Tokyo from signing a World War II peace treaty with Moscow.

But bilateral ties have thawed since a 1993 landmark visit to Japan by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who promised that the row would be solved through dialogue.

Japan has fought Russia four times this century and during the cold war regarded the Soviet Union as its greatest military threat, with the attention of its armed forces focused on Vladivostok, home of the Soviet, now Russian, Pacific Fleet.

It was only in 1994 that Japan stopped calling Russia a "latent threat" to this country's security.

"This is a chance for Russian-Japanese exchanges to be strengthened at a time when our two countries have started a political dialogue," Vice-Admiral Takashi Ishiyama, commander of the Japanese Navy's Combined Fleet, told the ceremony.

"By exchanging views, by surmounting the obstacle of language and customs, by our expressing our needs, thoughts and difficulties, we can support fuller mutual understanding," Adm. Ishiyama said.

The Admiral Vinogradov was returning a favour. Last July, the Japanese destroyer Kurama visited Vladivostok to take part in events honouring the 300th anniversary of the birth of the Russian Navy. It was the first Japanese warship to make a courtesy call at a Russian port since 1925.

Russian premier begins official visit in Beijing

BEIJING (AFP) — Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin held talks Friday with China's top leaders in a bid to push trade between the two giant neighbours to \$20 billion by the turn of the century.

Mr. Chernomyrdin and his Chinese counterpart, Li Peng, chatted cordially at an official welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People before starting substantive discussions on economic ties including gas, electricity and rail cooperation.

Later in the day, the Russian premier met President Jiang Zemin before a signing ceremony with Mr. Li at the Great Hall of the People

which was scheduled for the late afternoon.

Inter-governmental agreements due to be signed include a general accord on boosting trade volume, one on maintaining the Russian consulate in Hong Kong, another on cooperation on oil, gas and electricity from Siberia and a third on using Russian rolling stock on Chinese railways.

According to Chinese sources, there is a more specific agreement under wraps to build a pipeline from eastern Siberia to northern China at a cost of up to \$5 billion that will allow the export of a maximum of 30 billion cubic metres of gas a year from Russia.

An accord to sell a maximum of 20 billion kilowatt hours of Siberian electricity to China along a 2,500 kilometre power line crossing through Mongolia is also on the cards.

Mr. Chernomyrdin last met Mr. Jiang in Moscow in April after a December meeting with Mr. Li in the Russian capital when the two premiers agreed to hold regular meetings.

He is accompanied by Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov and three ministers and the delegation is also expected to press for several major projects, including a \$10-billion deal to supply equipment for the Three Gorges

hydro-electric dam on the Yangtze River and the construction of a nuclear power plant in Jiangsu province.

Political relations between the former Communist rivals have warmed considerably since the last Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev visited Beijing in May 1989 — in the midst of the Tiananmen Square democracy protests — and ended the three-decade Sino-Soviet split.

At a landmark Moscow summit in April the presidents of Russia and China — Boris Yeltsin and Jiang Zemin — announced a new era in ties and called for a new "multi-polar" world order.

Religious freedom act thrown out in U.S.

NEW YORK — In a decision that stunned religious leaders in the U.S., the Supreme Court Wednesday struck down the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, a four-year-old law that was intended to limit government interference in religion.

The effect will be to alter government's relationship with religion and to make it more difficult to challenge government actions that are thought to restrict religious freedom.

The 6-3 court ruling is expected to reverberate across every religious community in the U.S. Religious leaders spanning the spectrum, who had lobbied fiercely for the act in the early 1990s, have called this the most important church-state case ever decided by the court.

"Are Americans going to remain free to practice their religion protected from undue government interference?" asked Rabbi David Saperstein, an attorney who directs the Religious Action Centre of Reform Judaism. "Today, Americans will once again find that their free exercise of religion will be subject to government regulation, even when no significant government interest in the infringement of religion is involved."

Freedom of religion is a fundamental right in the U.S.

However, that freedom often conflicts with governmental laws and actions, and the issue that has plagued the U.S. since 1990 was how to draw the line between religious freedom and governmental prerogatives.

In a 1990 case, the court said laws that are otherwise "neutral" toward religion can be valid even if the effect is that they infringe on some people's religious beliefs. The 1993 act was intended to overturn that ruling. Yesterday, however, the court said Congress had overstepped its bounds.

Yesterday's case stemmed from a dispute over zoning and "historic landmark preservation" in the Texas town of Boerne. The town's St. Peter Catholic Church has more than 2,000 members, but its 70-year-old sanctuary holds fewer than 250. When it sought city permission to tear down part of the sanctuary and enlarge its "Spanish mission" building, the Boerne Landmark Commission said no, contending that the building was worthy of preservation.

The church countered that its right to religious freedom, as guaranteed under the 1993 act, took precedence over a governmental interest in preservation. The church lost in yesterday's ruling — Jerusalem Post.

Albright boosts Hanoi ties, also pushes MIA issue

HANOI (R) — Madeleine Albright, on her first visit to Vietnam as U.S. secretary of state, arrived in Hanoi Friday to press Vietnamese leaders for speedier economic reforms and reemphasise the issue of Americans missing from the Vietnam War.

Her first act Friday was to be briefed by the military officer overseeing the U.S. Missing-In-Action (MIA) office that searches for the 1,584 servicemen in Vietnam still unaccounted for after the war that the U.S. lost in 1975.

Of that number, 196 cases were priority cases in January 1992 — that is, cases based on five sightings of individuals — and now only 48 individuals remain on that list, military officials said.

On Friday, Mrs. Albright also signed a copyright pact seen as part of efforts to boost economic ties between the two former foes.

"I look forward to its vigorous enforcement," she said of the accord, which covers literary, musical, dramatic and choreographic works as well

as movies.

The MIA issue has long been an emotional one in the United States, which for years was bitterly rent by the war in which Washington backed South Vietnam against the Communist north.

But there are increasing suggestions the intense search for missing servicemen — costing about \$10 million a year — may one day have to end without resolving all the cases.

"I don't think you'll get 100 per cent accounting,"

said army Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Chase, the chief of the search operations who briefed Mrs. Albright.

The U.S. government has long committed itself to the "fullest possible accounting" of the missing servicemen but Lt.-Col. Chase said what that term means "is a very debatable point."

One U.S. official predicted the searching and investigating, done with the help of the Vietnamese government, would continue for at least another five years.

H. Kong journalists fear for press freedom under China

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong journalists Friday feared for the future of press freedom under Chinese rule and said self-censorship was spreading like an insidious disease.

"The signs do not seem positive. We hope we are proved wrong," the Hong Kong Journalists Association concluded in a report released just four days before China takes back the British colony.

They also accused Britain of doing too little, too late in the dying days of empire and criticised "its failure to remove all colonial laws threatening to free expression."

"The trend towards democracy and governmental accountability, which was begun all too belatedly by the British, needs to be reinforced, not reversed, if the rights that Hong Kong people now enjoy are to be protected," association chief Carol Lai Pui-Yee said.

Hong Kong, with one of the richest and freest media markets in Asia, has 20 dailies serving its population of 6.4 million people.

But the 1994 case of journalist Xi Yang set alarm bells ringing for reporters who may now fall prey to self-censorship.

Mr. Xi scored a scoop for the Ming Pao newspaper on Chinese interest rates and gold sales, and ended up in a mainland jail for three years.

He was sentenced to 12 years after being found guilty of stealing state secrets but released on parole in January. A Central Bank clerk who leaked him the figures was jailed for 15 years.

The association report — jointly written with Article 19, the International Centre Against Censorship

— labelled Mr. Xi's arrest and imprisonment "a tragic sham."

After the Xi watershed case, Hong Kong journalists fear that a more timid press may censor itself for fear of disapproval from Big Brother across the border.

"It is self-censorship rather than direct intervention that will more likely undermine freedom of expression," concluded the report, entitled "The Die Is Cast."

"Hong Kong appears to be in the grip of a renewed and more virulent bout of this insidious disease... this is a dangerous path that can only lead to the media being pressured to accept greater restraints," it said.

Hong Kong's future constitution, the Basic Law, offers an assurance on press freedom. But detailed rules on issues such as contempt of court and official secrets have yet to be spelled out, creating uncertainty.

Association chief Lai, presenting the report's conclusions, said: "Leading newspapers are now thinking more carefully about what they say and report for fear of offending China's sensitivities."

Association member Cliff Bale echoed her concerns, predicting an uncertain future at government-funded Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK).

"We currently enjoy a high degree of autonomy, for the future, we don't know but there is a great deal of apprehension."

"If you see less and less of (pro-democracy activists) Emily Lau and Martin Lee, then you will know there is something going on at RTHK."

Meanwhile, Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten refused to become "just a

part of history" when he fended off an opponent Friday in his final public grilling before the British flag comes down.

Mr. Patten's last question-and-answer session for public radio was the latest in a long line of final appointments for the governor who will sail out of Hong Kong in the early hours of Tuesday.

Despite his much-publicised brushes with Beijing, Mr. Patten remains one of the most popular figures in Hong Kong and the 75-minute programme was almost embarrassingly dominated by well-wishers.

The governor again warned against corruption taking a grip in post-handover Hong Kong and the need for quick and direct elections under the new administration.

But Mr. Patten seemed almost relieved when one man accused him of being "a dictator" in "occupied territory that is meant to be Chinese territory."

"I would like to tell you this," said the caller, who identified himself as Lee Ching-Yeung. "You must leave immediately on June 30. You must become just a part of history. I will give you a present. All the Vietnamese migrants that you have taken on board, please take them with you."

Mr. Patten replied that he was "glad we got one telephone call from 'one of the Friends of Happy Valley'" — his name for the Xinhua News Agency in the Happy Valley district, China's de facto consulate in Hong Kong for the past 50 years, and a vocal critic of the governor's democracy reforms.

"People might have thought there were not any of them left in Hong Kong. But there are one or two of

them left still loyally sticking to the script."

Mr. Patten took up the challenge. "Of course I'll go straight away on June 30. Well, within sort of 45 minutes. We have to go through some of the decent dignities."

"I'll go but Britain will continue to have a moral responsibility for what happens in Hong Kong, and let me just put that very firmly on the record once again."

Mr. Patten has said his international reputation was due largely to Xinhua's often bitter attacks.

"I support without reservation all the New China News Agency (Xinhua) has done to give the what American politicians call international name recognition," he told the British newspaper The Guardian in an interview released Friday.

"They have turned a humble failed British politician into a knight on a white charger."

Mr. Patten, a former British minister and chairman of the Conservative Party, repeated that his only regret from his years as governor was that he may have argued too long with Beijing over his plan for greater democracy in the territory.

One of his final warnings for the public was of the danger of corruption taking a hold.

Mr. Patten said: "The only thing I would like to leave behind is a feeling among people in Hong Kong that I'd done my best, not perfectly, but that I'd tried as hard as I could."

"I think that is more important than having things named after you or having letters after your name or whatever."

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Mission unaccomplished

THE FOREIGN ministers of the Damascus Declaration countries concluded their meetings in Latakia, Syria, earlier this week with customary clichés about Arab political and economic aspirations. But the truth is that they did not achieve any concrete results towards meeting the real challenges facing the Arab Nation.

The ministers representing Syria, Egypt and the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), did not agree on the controversial convening in Qatar late this year of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit that will be attended by Israel. Nor did they finalise plans for an Arab common market as they originally said they hoped to do. Even their denunciation of the Turkish incursion into northern Iraq has had little effect since it was preceded by the announcement of a major Turkish troop pullout from that Arab country. All what the ministers could agree on, it seems, was a reiteration of an Arab summit resolution calling for a freeze in normalisation of ties with Israel while the Israeli government continued to be recalcitrant in its stance on the peace process.

The foreign ministers, who represent the Arab countries that opposed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, seem to have failed for the umpteenth time to take solid steps towards achieving the most important goal for now, which is the establishment of the perceived common market to counter the so-called Middle East economic region, as has been urged by Egypt in recent months, especially in light of Israel's obstinacy against giving up the occupied Arab territories and addressing legitimate Palestinian rights.

The failure of those countries to go beyond rhetoric is not the right signal to send to the Netanyahu government or to the Americans whose House of Representatives has just passed a resolution that would make Jerusalem the undivided capital of Israel. It was up to the eight to work, even at this late hour, for narrowing the gaps between their bloc and the rest of the Arab World on the crucial challenges that face all of us. Maybe it is time now for the Arab League, and not just the signatories of the Damascus Declaration, to move in unison towards achieving a common stand, first to put our own house in order and later on ways to confront Israel's expansionism and achieve justice for our cause.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Arab Al Yawm criticised the demolition this week, by the government, of houses built by citizens living in the town of Dirar, in the Jordan Valley; the government claims the houses had been built on state-owned land. Taher Adwan said the poor local residents have lived in these houses since 1962 and the local councils supplied them with water and electricity, but the government says that they are squatters who had been served notice to leave; failing to do that, the government decided to demolish the houses. The writer noted that scores of influential people had committed the same act, building villas and cultivating a large portion of land owned by the state, but that no action has been taken against them over the past 30 years. Those citizens who have now lost their homes and lands should rather have been honoured by the government for building houses and cultivating lands to earn a living, saving the state any expense that normally is given to farmers in the poor and underdeveloped regions of Jordan. In contrast, said the writer, immigrants arriving in Israel are offered financial and other help from the state to settle in the Jordan Valley and cultivate lands. It is regrettable that in Jordan such settlers are evicted from their homes, their trees are uprooted and their future and their security are placed in balance as they join the army of unemployed citizens.

A writer for Al Ra'i warned that in its drive to impose hegemony on the Arabs, the U.S.-Israeli alliance is trying to ruin the Jordanian-Palestinian relations, as it succeeded in the past in ruining Jordan's relations with Iraq and the country's ties with Syria. Tareq Masarweh said that this alliance is not seeking to establish a just and durable peace, but rather to isolate the Arab states from each other so that they can fall prey one by one and remain weak and unable to confront common challenges. The U.S. and Israel, which earlier succeeded in splitting the Arab World through the Camp David accords, isolated Egypt from the rest of the Arab countries and later hatched a conspiracy that led the Palestinians and Jordan to conclude separate accords with the Jewish state, according to the writer who accused this alliance of trying to isolate the Palestinians and the Jordanians from their Arab neighbours. The writer charged that the U.S.-Israeli alliance seeks to set traps for Syria and later, perhaps, for Iraq so they can fall prey to the Zionist-concocted conspiracy.

Jordanian Perspective

Jordan's improving relations with the Gulf states can best serve peace in the region

THE RECENT visit of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and his forthcoming visits to several other Gulf countries clearly show not only that Jordanian-Gulf relations have returned to normal but also that both sides are keen on building a relationship that serves the interests of the people. Hopefully, an announcement of the reopening of the Jordanian embassy in Kuwait and return of the Kuwaiti ambassador to Amman would be forthcoming soon, following the resumption of direct flights between Amman and Kuwait City.

It was no easy task to shape the course of things to this level so far, after the strain the Jordanian-Gulf relations suffered in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Perseverance is the key element in the Jordanian approach to send the message across that its position during the Gulf crisis was aimed at best serving the higher interests of the Arab states. And we always believed that it was only a matter of time before others saw and understood it that way.

Anyway, we, Jordanians, are pleased that the concerted efforts of our leadership and government have paid off and our brotherly relations with the Gulf states show every sign of continued improvement.

Consolidation of our relations with the Gulf states comes at a time when Arab unity and solidarity is the need of the day, given the problems we face in the mammoth task of building peace in the Middle East, as well

as nurturing economic development that will contribute to upgrading the standard of living of all peoples in the region.

The hurdles that the Israeli government is deliberately placing in the way to comprehensive, just and durable peace in the Middle East could be removed only by strong and concerted action by the Arab World. That indeed remains the Jordanian preoccupation at this point in time, while not losing sight of the objective of regional coexistence and understanding, based on respect for the legitimate rights of all parties in the region — something Israel is not willing even to acknowledge.

A cursory glance at the political map of efforts to break the logjam in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations clearly indicates that the Israeli government does not seem to be bothered by the prospect of collective Arab action that would wipe off the smirk based on the conviction that no such action would be or could be forthcoming. If anything, it seems to be pursuing a course which bases itself on Arab discord.

We in Jordan have always made it clear that Israel is mistaken if it thinks that it could count on our docility; what it might deem as docility is simply our acceptance of the fact that peace is the only option for the region and there cannot be any turning back from the process that was launched in Madrid. This definitely means a consistent policy of trying to solve problems and remove snags in the peace process rather than inflame passions and

complicate things.

But that does not mean accepting things the Israeli way and looking at the situation through the Israeli eyes, as the Israeli government seems to expect us to do.

First and foremost, we in Jordan are part and parcel of the Arab World and will not agree to anything less than complete acceptance of and respect for the Arab, Muslim and Palestinian rights, both territorial and political. We are under no illusion that we could accomplish this on our own. This is an area which requires a very closely coordinated approach by the entire Arab World, which, for the last 50 years, has always professed unwavering commitment to the Arab cause in the equation with Israel, particularly the Palestinians' quest for their rights.

The only way to achieve that is an entire reassessment of the Arab situation today and of what could, would and should be done to present a united Arab front to press for the realisation of the Arab, Muslim and Palestinian rights. And that could come only through close consultations among the Arab leaders. That, in turn, definitely means a full-fledged Arab summit or a mini-summit of the leaders immediately concerned with the issue.

As such, the returning closeness in Jordan's relations with the Arab Gulf states is a vital element, and that is why we in Jordan are heartened by the latest developments in the relationships between the Kingdom and the Gulf countries, including Kuwait.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

'Improving infrastructure in refugee camps — a prelude to permanently settling them in Jordan'

REVIEWED BY
ELIA NASRALLAH

IN THEIR editorial columns, the local daily newspapers last week focused attention on the political developments in the Middle East, the situation arising from Turkey's invasion of Iraq and a host of domestic affairs.

A writer for Al Dostour urged the Jordanian government to boycott Ariel Sharon, the Israeli minister who in an interview with Egypt television claimed that Jordan is part of Israel and a land that was cut off from the Jewish state in 1923.

Jihad Momani said that Mr. Sharon had stated in the interview that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is part of Israel's land, now inhabited by a majority of Palestinians.

This remark by an Israeli minister could mean that the Jewish state might some day launch war on Jordan to liberate it from its present occupiers, similar to Israel's claim in 1967 that its forces have liberated Jerusalem, the writer pointed out.

He said that the reply to Mr. Sharon should be decisive: total boycott which, he added, might deter other terrorists and extremists from taking a similar anti-peace stand.

Tareq Masarweh, a writer for Al Ra'i daily, criticised a Jordanian government plan to improve the infrastructure in the Palestinian refugee camps in the Kingdom as a prelude to permanently settling the refugees in the country.

The writer said that no one has yet asked these refugees whether they wished to live permanently in the Kingdom, neither has the Palestine Liberation Organisation given its views in this regard.

Why should our government impose a de facto solution on the Palestinians, copying, for that matter, Israel's de facto Jewish settlements programmes in Palestine, he asked.

The writer also noted that while Jordan is borrowing money to carry out the settlement plan, thus increasing the country's financial burdens and debts, the Israelis build settlements from the funds supplied by the United States.

Commenting on the European nations' stand vis-à-vis the Middle East question, a writer for Al

Ra'i said that the recent declaration by the European Union nations, in Amsterdam, was a positive step.

It is to be recalled, nevertheless, that the Europeans also issued a strong declaration in Venice 25 years ago, in favour of the Palestinian rights, but failed to follow that declaration with practical steps to help end the sufferings of the Palestinians, said Tayseer Zibri.

What we are getting from the Europeans, he said, is lip service with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is to be noted that the United States, Israel's strategic ally, is not disturbed at all by the European Union's declaration because it is assured that no practical action to force Israel to comply with U.N. resolutions can come from the Europeans, except providing financial and economic aid to the Palestinians, according to the writer.

Riham Farra, a writer for Al Arab Al Yawm, said that while the Palestinians under Israeli occupation face the atrocities of the occupying forces day and night, the Arab governments suffice themselves with issuing condemnation statements, and while Jerusalem is being Judaised, the Islamic Nation seems not to care about the future of the Islamic holy sites in the Arab city.

If the Arabs and Muslims wish to back the Palestinian people's steadfastness and resistance, they should at least collect funds that can finance the Palestinians' economic and social projects which help them maintain their steadfastness, said the writer.

The ideal thing, according to the writer, is for the Muslim nations to act collectively and exercise pressure on the United States and the world community to save the Palestinians and their lands and the Islamic holy places.

A writer for Al Aswaq commended the Palestine National Authority for its success in preventing a suicide attack on Israeli targets.

Yahya Mahmoud said that by stopping a Palestinian woman who was trying to carry out the suicide bombing in Israel, the Palestinian leadership has proved to be politically mature and keen on

depriving Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu of the excuse to carry out further arbitrary measures against the Palestinians and to appear as a hero in the eyes of the Israeli public for retaliating against what could look as a terrorist act.

The writer said that had the attack occurred, the Israelis would have found a pretext to refuse any negotiations with the Palestinians. He added that the only alternative for the Palestine National Authority is to exercise political pressure on the Netanyahu government, through the peace movements inside Israel and through international pressure on the Jewish state.

Marwan Hazin, a writer for Al Arab Al Yawm, reflected on the Iraq-Syrian rapprochement and said that although the Syrian leaders maintain that only trade relations are being restored between the two countries, political reconciliation is bound to follow.

The Syrian vice president, Abdul Halim Khaddam, has said that Syria cannot stand by, doing nothing, while Iraq is being exposed to danger, and this is sufficient proof that Damascus intends to follow up the trade links with steps towards political reconciliation, noted the writer.

He said it is hoped that the two sides will reach consensus on various issues that caused their estrangement for 17 years because an end to differences between Baghdad and Damascus means enhancing solidarity among the Arab states at large.

Oreih Rintawi, a writer for Al Dostour, reflected on the "Damascus Declaration" countries, which include Syria, Egypt and six Gulf countries, and said that this Arab bloc is not a suitable framework to restore solidarity among Arab countries.

Noting that the bloc came into being following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the writer said that it was an open alliance directed against Iraq and therefore it can by no means help the efforts to bring about reconciliation among the Arab countries.

The writer said that if solidarity is to be achieved, it can only be done under the umbrella of the Arab League which

groups all Arab states.

So far, no one is happy about the performance of the Arab League because of its failures in the past, but there can be no alternative to a collective action on the part of the Arab states but through the league which the Arabs can reform and whose future actions could be directed for the benefit of all Arab countries.

Ahmad Jamil Shaker, a writer for Al Dostour, discussed the investment climate in Jordan, saying that despite the declared determination by the public and private sectors of to achieve it, there still exist major obstacles in the path of investors.

Investors continue to face complications, delays and obstacles in their bid to buy land and obtain licences to start operations from a host of departments, like the municipality, the water authority, the Jordan Telecommunications Company, the Customs Department, etc.

According to the writer, in view of the situation, a large number of Jordanian investors have decided to pull out and invest in Egypt and Jabal Ali, in Dubai, where facilities are open for all and no complications stand in their way.

It seems, said the writer, that the investment promotion department is powerless and can do nothing to cut down on the routine that deprives Jordan of the investments on which Jordanians attach hope to help them fight unemployment and poverty.

A writer for Al Arab Al Yawm strongly criticised the Jordan Valley Authority for bulldozing the homes of poor farmers in the Deir Alla region of the Jordan Valley.

Mohammad Subeishi said that it was the Jordan Valley Authority which had supplied these houses with water and electricity, while knowing that they had been built on state-owned lands, thus encouraging squatting.

He said that while this authority demolishes houses of poor families, it turns a blind eye on palaces and villas built by influential and wealthy Jordanians on state-owned lands in the same Jordan Valley region.

The writer said that this is unjust to the poor farmers and warned that injustice could lead to explosion.

LETTERS

Protecting domestic workers

To the Editor:

THANKS to the intervention of influential friends and the minister of interior, two Filipina domestic workers from an abusive home in Abdoun were set free on June 21, the day my letter "Help for the helper", concerning their plight, appeared in the Jordan Times. Unfortunately, they were not consulted about their destiny and were sent back to the Philippines.

Although both women had expressed the desire to stay in Jordan, earn some well-deserved money and have the experience of working for a kind, hospitable Jordanian family, they were not given the opportunity to do so. Instead, they were paid a part of what was owed to them, with the remainder of their money going to pay for their own air tickets. They were not allowed phone calls before leaving and therefore my helper was neither able to send messages to her family or to bid her sister good-bye.

Although I am very thankful that these women are now free, I am sad that they had such a terrible experience in Jordan. I hope that from now embassies or consulates who have citizens working in Jordan will devise better procedures to ensure that the contracts of these foreign workers are strictly enforced and that their basic human rights are not violated.

Karen Asfour,
Amman.The rule of law
vs law of the jungle

To the Editor:

I AM shocked and puzzled by the story "Man receives seven-year prison term for daughter's death" (Jordan Times, June 25, 1997). How is it that a murder so brutal, cold and calculated could carry such a seemingly light sentence?

Is it because the victim was a woman who had been judged by certain members of society to have "behaved badly"? I believe that such apparent leniency when a woman is murdered or when there is a so-called "crime of honour" sends the clear and unmistakable message that violence against women and children is all right and that women are mere property to be disposed of at will.

Could it be that there is a strong element of gender discrimination in the way certain sentences are imposed? Is it that a person convicted of killing a man often receives a severe penalty — even death, while a person convicted of killing his own daughter gets off with seven years?

I do not know the answer to these questions, but I think it is high time we, as a society, gave them serious consideration.

Jordan is a civilised country. We have laws and courts. People should not be encouraged to take the law in their own hands by acting as judge and executioner against members of their own family or anyone else.

It is time for tolerance of so-called "crimes of honour" to end. We must choose whether we want to build a civil society, based on the rule of law and respect for the rights of individuals and families, or whether we want the law of the jungle.

Ali Abunimah,
Chicago
ahabunim@midway.uchicago.edu

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

3 human species may have coexisted

By John Noble Wilford

NEW YORK — Scientists have found stunning new data showing that a third human species apparently coexisted on earth with two others as recently as 30,000 years ago.

In research that could redraw the human family tree and is certain to be controversial, the scientists reexamined two major fossil sites along the Solo River in Java and found that an early human relative, *Homo erectus*, appeared to have lived there until about 27,000 to 53,000 years ago.

Writing in a recent issue of the journal *Science*, the scientists said the new dates were "surprisingly young and, if proved correct, imply that *H. erectus* persisted much longer in Southeast Asia than elsewhere in the world."

Confirmation of the new dates would mean that at least in Java, this archaic species, which evolved 1.8 million years ago, survived some 25,000 years after it was thought to have become extinct. This surviving population of *H. erectus* would have been alive at the same time as anatomically modern humans — *Homo sapiens* — and also Neanderthals, whose exact place in human evolution is the subject of endless debate.

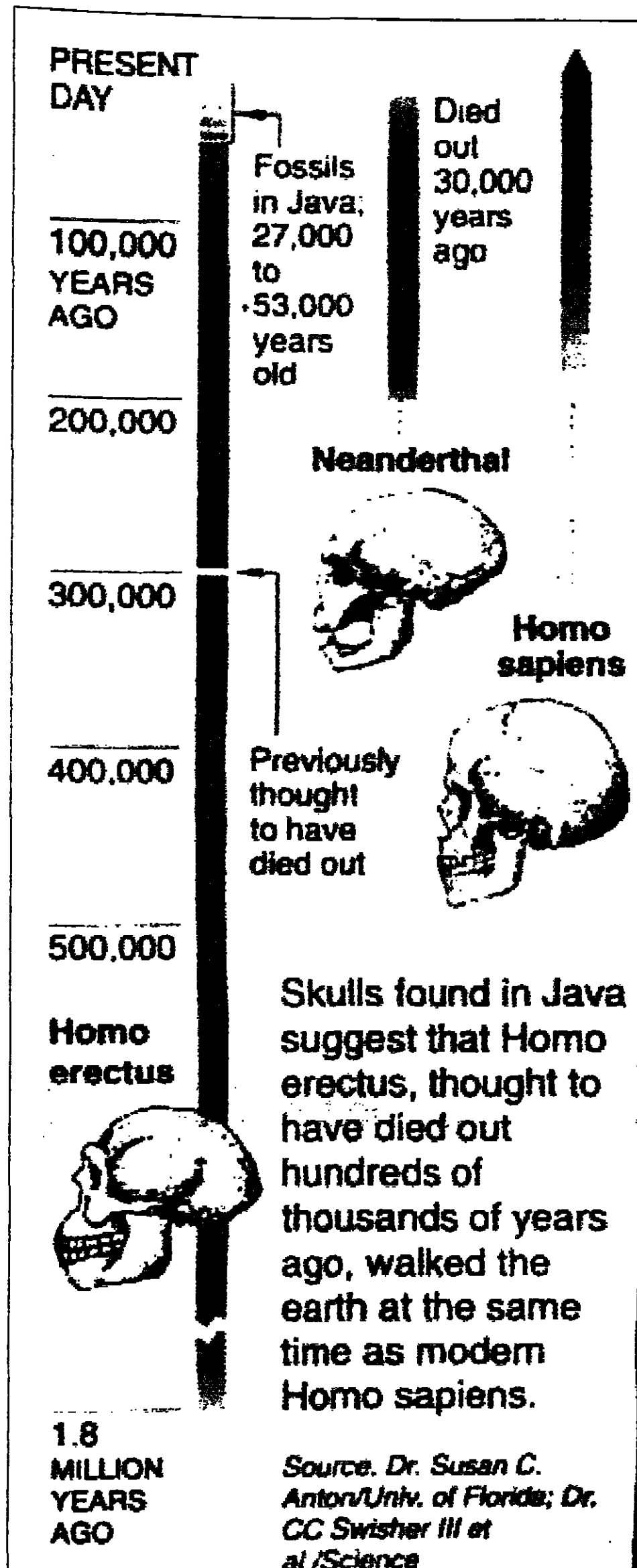
The Neanderthals, who lived in Europe and western Asia for some 300,000 years, appear to have made their last stand 30,000 years ago in southern Spain. By then, modern *H. sapiens*, who are widely thought to have evolved in Africa 200,000 to 100,000 years ago, had spread all over Africa and Eurasia, as far as Australia. It is not known how much contact the three species had, or if they could interbreed.

In any case, specialists in human evolution noted, the new findings suggest that the present phenomenon of a solitary human species on earth may be more the exception than the rule.

Until about a couple of decades ago, scientists conceived of the human lineage as a neat progression of one species to the next and generally thought it impossible that two species could have overlapped in place or time.

Another implication of the more recent date for *H. erectus* is to undercut a pillar of the multiregional theory for the origin of modern *H. sapiens*.

As the most advanced known representatives of *H. erectus*, the Java fossils have appeared to be a clear intermediate step in the evolution of *H. erectus* in Southeast Asia to the first Australians, who were modern *H. sapiens*. This has lent support to the idea that modern humans emerged gradually out of *H. erectus* in many parts of the world. The alternative and more favoured out-of-Africa theory holds that modern humans evolved in Africa less than 200,000 years ago and



displaced *H. erectus* as they migrated to the ends of the earth.

The team of scientists, led by Carl Swisher of the Berkeley Geochronology Centre in California, concluded that it was "no longer chronologically plausible" to argue that the Java *H. erectus* evolved into Asian *H. sapiens*.

From earlier fossil evidence, Australian *H. sapiens* are at least 30,000 years old, and could be

much older, judging by rock art.

"The multiregionalists will have to do some fast talking to explain this," said Philip Rightmire, a paleoanthropologist at the State University of New York at Binghamton. "It's quite a blow for them to absorb, but neither side has won the day yet in this theoretical battle."

Milford Wolpoff, a paleoanthropologist at the University of Michigan

who is an outspoken leader of the multiregional theorists, questioned both the accuracy of the dates and the identification of the skulls at the Java sites, contending that they were *H. sapiens* and not *H. erectus*. Mr. Wolpoff said these questions should have been answered more convincingly before the team published its report.

As one who has studied the skulls at Ngandong, one of the two sites, and

compared them with early Australian *H. sapiens*, Mr. Wolpoff said the idea of an ancestral "link between them is incontrovertible."

In an accompanying article in *Science*, Alan Thorne of Australian National University in Canberra, one of Mr. Wolpoff's allies said, "there is a great long list of characters that are the same in the Solo skulls and the earliest known human people from Australia." Even if the Java fossils are indeed relatively young, Mr. Thorne added, they look so much like the Australian fossils that the two species may have shared a recent ancestor.

Both Mr. Rightmire, an authority on *H. erectus*, and Susan Anton, a paleoanthropologist at the University of Florida who was a member of Mr. Swisher's team, said they were satisfied that the Java specimens were *H. erectus*, although the skulls did show signs of their having evolved a somewhat larger brain than earlier members of the species. That *H. erectus* and *H. sapiens* now appear to have overlapped, Ms. Anton said, "raises the possibility of gene flow between the two lines."

The Java fossils were discovered in the 1930s by Dutch geologists. Various efforts to date the specimens have yielded ages of as high as 300,000 years and, recently, as low as 100,000 years.

The most reliable means of dating is to determine the age of volcanic ash in the sediments, but none is associated with the Solo specimens. A number of other techniques were not suitable, and the skulls themselves could not be dated because they would have been damaged.

New York Times

Annan says Israel continues...

(Continued from page 1)

conclude that conditions set by Israel made it impossible for him to send a special envoy to the area to help prepare his report. It was therefore based on "reliable sources available to the United Nations at headquarters and in the field," he said.

The report said settlement activity continued unabated throughout the occupied territories even during 1992-96, a reference to the period prior to the election of Israel's right-wing government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"The Abu Ghneim incident is nevertheless viewed as particularly serious for a number of reasons," Mr. Annan added, citing political, geographic, demographic and economic factors, as well as effects on the peace process.

Politically, the start of building at Jabal Abu Ghneim on March 18 "represents the first move to construct an entirely new settlement on occu-

pied Palestinian lands since a freeze was imposed on such activities by the previous Israeli government in the context of the peace process."

Geographically it "represents the final link in a chain of settlements constructed by Israel around occupied Arab east Jerusalem," while demographically it would have a "significant effect on further advancing the forced alteration of the religious and ethnic composition of occupied Arab east Jerusalem."

Economically it was "expected to have damaging effects on an already devastated Palestinian economy in the occupied territories."

The report said Israel's refusal to abandon construction at Jabal Abu Ghneim "appears to represent, in the view of the Palestinian people, the largest single negative factor in the breakdown of the peace process, and the fomenting of unrest in the occupied territories."

"Palestinian commu-

ties in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including Jerusalem, have responded with two months of public demonstrations and protest."

Mr. Annan said Israeli settlement expansion activities also continued during this period in numerous locations throughout the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel was also widely reported to have issued plans for the creation of new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"External support for settlements and their economic infrastructures continued...including through private support from foreign companies and individuals," the report said.

"There was also a marked increase in Palestinian violence against Israeli civilians, settlers and military personnel," the report said, mentioning several fatal incidents including the March 21 bombing of a Tel Aviv cafe.

Netanyahu papers over cracks...

(Continued from page 1)

credibility in the eyes of Israelis.

An opinion poll in the Yediot Aharonot newspaper Friday showed that Mr. Netanyahu's popularity rating had plunged 10 points in a month to its lowest point since he came to power a year ago.

Twenty-nine per cent of people questioned said they would vote for Mr. Netanyahu if elections were held today, while 45 per cent said they supported his left-wing rival, Labour leader Ehud Barak.

A second poll for the Maariv newspaper, in

which only Jews were questioned, gave the prime minister 33 per cent of the vote and Mr. Barak 43 per cent.

Mr. Netanyahu survived a motion of no-confidence in parliament earlier this week, but the open defection of nine MPs from his coalition was seen by Israeli commentators as a sign his government would not last its full term until 2000.

"Another victory like this and the government is done for," wrote an editorialist for the Maariv newspaper.

The arrival of Mr. Sharon on the peacemaking scene may also add

to Mr. Netanyahu's woes.

An outspoken opponent of Palestinian self-rule and a champion of Jewish settlers, Mr. Sharon is the only Israeli minister to regularly refer to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat as an arch "terrorist."

A fellow cabinet member, Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani, called on Mr. Sharon Friday to shake Mr. Arafat's hand to "show the evolution in mentalities."

"I am sure Mr. Sharon would 'click with' the Palestinians," Mr. Kahalani said.

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First BMWs made in Egypt roll off assembly line

CAIRO (AFP) — German car maker BMW opened its first passenger car assembly plant in the Middle East in Egypt on June 25, following in the tire tread of its compatriot, Mercedes Benz.

Bayerische Motoren Werke Ag plans on assembling around 1,000 BMW 523i cars in the first year of production at the plant in the industrial town of October 6th, 20 kilometres north of Cairo, company officials said.

The first four cars rolled off the assembly line during a ceremony attended by company chairman Bernd Pischetsrieder.

There are already buyers for 650 cars, Mr. Pischet-

srieder said, adding, "demand is very high and we have a long waiting list." BMW invested more than \$34.6 million in the plant located on a site where the Japanese car maker Nissan has also rented space and will start producing cars later this year.

BMW will invest \$14.4 million in Egypt to increase the number of dealerships in the country from four to seven.

In 1996, BMW sold 322 cars in Egypt, an emerging market for luxury cars which has also seen the arrival of Jaguars and Rolls Royce.

"Our aim is to guarantee a high-quality car at a com-

patible price and our locally-assembled 523i will sell in Egypt for \$84,000 or less than the imported one," said area Manager Markus Siebrecht.

The plant will be run by the Egyptian firm Al Fotouh Company for vehicle assembling. It will employ 120 people, in addition to four German technicians.

More than 40 per cent of the car's components will be locally made while essential parts such as the engine and gearboxes will come from Germany.

BMW expects to sell 60,000 locally-assembled or imported cars a year and anticipates that after four years demand will grow to

100,000 cars annually.

On June 3 Daimler-Benz Ag announced the setting up of an assembly plant in Egypt for its best-selling Mercedes E-200 saloon car, with the first batch of a total annual output of 2,500 vehicles to roll off the assembly line by the end of 1997.

Egypt has a population of more than 61 million, and 2.65 million vehicles, including 1.11 million passenger cars.

In 1996 a total of 34,000 cars were produced in Egypt, where Peugeot, Skoda, Citroen, Suzuki, Opel, Fiat, Jeep and Hyundai also have assembly plants.

World Bank touts 'effective state' for development

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The success stories in world development have come from an active state that harnesses the energy of the marketplace, rather than a "minimalist" state, a World Bank report has said.

The World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World threw cold water over the theory of the so-called "minimalist" state that allows market forces to rule.

"Those countries which have concluded that the role of the state should be less prominent ought to consider how the dazzling growth of East Asia, and even the industrial revolution, were made possible by an 'effective state,'" the bank said in a statement accompanying the report.

Such a state "harnesses the energy of private business and individuals and acts as a partner and catalyst instead of restricting their partnership."

"Many have felt that the logical endpoint (of current debate) was a minimalist state," said World Bank President James Wolfensohn.

"Such a state would do no harm but neither could it do much good. The report explains why this extreme view is at odds with the evidence of the world's development success stories," Mr. Wolfensohn added.

But the report also maintained that central governments need not monopolise infrastructure and social services.

Examining development success stories, the report concludes that to be most effective a government needs to "focus on the basics of what it does best and reinvestigate public institutions."

"Most important," said World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz, "we now see that markets and governments are complementary. The state is essential for putting in place the appropriate institutional foundations for markets."

The report recommends a two-part strategy to bring about an "effective state."

To match the state's role to institutional capabilities is achieved by establishing

a foundation of law; maintaining government credibility; investing in basic social services and infrastructure; providing a safety net for vulnerable members of society; and protecting the environment.

The second key reform is to reinvigorate the state's institutional capabilities "by providing incentives for public officials to perform better while keeping arbitrary action in check."

The report suggests three basic incentives: Establish effective rules and restraints; foster competition; and increase citizen's voice and partnership with the private sector.

"Where governments lack ways to listen, they are not responsive to people's interests, especially those of minorities and the poor," said World Development Report team leader Ajay Chhibber.

Also essential is cutting back on discretionary authority, the report said.

"Policies that lower controls on foreign trade, remove entry barriers for private industry, and privatise state firms in a way that ensures competition will help fight corruption," it added.

"Decentralisation is bringing many benefits to China, India, much of Latin America and other parts of the world," the report pointed out.

Competition among provinces, cities, and localities can spur the development of more effective policies and programmes, it added.

The report said the globalisation of the world economy "makes the role of the state even more critical, both in handling the subsequent shock of the transition and in helping people and companies exploit the opportunities of the global marketplace."

"As we approach the 21st century, the challenge for states is neither to shrink into insignificance, nor to dominate markets, but to start taking those small steps," Mr. Wolfensohn said.

Structural problems dampen recovery in Asian economies

SINGAPORE (AFP) — An Asian economic upturn this year could be limited by higher real interest rates and structural problems in the property, retail and banking sectors, an investment house has warned.

"Despite the positive impact of the electronics recovery, economic growth will be moderated by the growing recognition of imbalances emerging especially in the property and retail markets..." Socgen-Crosby Securities PTE Ltd. said.

Such imbalances had the potential to affect the stability as well of banking systems with a high degree of exposure to the property business, it said in a report on regional economies.

"These developments are complicating economic management and the implication will be a more cautious approach by policy makers," said Socgen-Crosby, which analysed the economies of China, Thailand, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

The report said the gross domestic product (GDP) of almost every Asian economy was expected to either shift up or stabilise at close to 1996 levels, adding the region would outperform the world economy and other developing regions.

Cyclical factors, including the recovery in the electronics industry and an export rebound, would help lift GDP growth, especially in economies such as Malaysia and Singapore which are highly geared to electronics.

Real GDP growth of 8.0 per cent was forecast for Malaysia, 6.5 per cent for Thailand, 8.1 per cent for Indonesia, 5.6 per cent for the Philippines, 10.5 per cent for China, 5.4 per cent for Hong Kong and 7.3 per cent for Singapore.

But the structural problems, coupled with higher real interest rates amid a rising trend in U.S. rates, may "limit the strength of this economic upturn," Socgen-Crosby cautioned.

It described the property and banking sector worries as a hangover of the long period of "extremely high (and excessive) growth" across the region

to the mid-1990s. "In our view, this was a period of hubris which encouraged the belief of ever-increasing profitability of the property sector," the report said.

"The result of these over-inflated expectations was that overly ambitious projects were undertaken which are now coming on stream and oversupply is becoming increasingly evident," the report added.

Tempted by expectations of attractive returns and secure lendings, banks have in many cases increased their exposure to the property sector to high levels, often at the expense of lending to more productive sectors like manufacturing, it said.

Socgen-Crosby cited the example of Thailand, which is faced with a huge property glut and falling prices, and added similar problems were expected elsewhere in the region, notably Malaysia.

Philippine authorities has ordered banks to limit lending to the property sector to avert a possible finance sector crisis amid fears of oversupply that analysts say could lead to a collapse such as that which Thailand experienced earlier this year.

Other problems facing the region include an increasing shortage of skilled workers, leading to high wage growth and continued pressure on unit labour costs, Socgen-Crosby said.

It predicted monetary policy would remain tight and interest rates would not fall in Malaysia. Overheating concerns would keep policy tight also in Indonesia and the Philippines would tighten policy to combat inflationary pressures, it said.

"Although dampening growth... the positive aspect (of high interest rates) is that it will further encourage the mobilisation of domestic savings and help reduce current account deficits," the investment house said.

"Given lower investment rates and higher savings rates, this should ensure that current account deficits will be at comfortable levels over the next few years," it added.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7327	0.6010	1.4446	114.48	1.3808	1695.00	1.9306	5.8475
DE Mark	0.5771	-	0.3464	0.8337	66.03	0.7968	977.79	1.1254	3.3739
GB Sterling	1.6640	2.8855	-	2.4046	190.58	2.2977	2821.84	3.2472	9.7348
CH Franc	0.6822	1.1938	0.4154	-	79.21	0.9592	1172.38	134.94	4.0452
JP Yen	0.0087	1.5127	0.5241	1.2811	-	1.2054	14.79	170.28	5.1043
CA Dollar	0.7242	1.2353	0.4304	1.0310	1.21	-	1205.88	1.3900	4.1676
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0228	0.3544	0.8653	1481.70	0.8160	-	11.51	3.4512
NL Guilder	0.5127	0.8833	0.3077	74.07	58.65	0.7078	868.27	-	2.9871
FR Franc	0.1710	0.2963	0.1027	24.6982	19.85	0.2381	33.35	33.3500	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7505	0.3770	3.6398	0.3022	3.6726	1535.50	3.3930
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2973	0.5324	5.1410	0.4268	5.1873	2168.79	4.7924
GB Sterling	0.2666	0.1888	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0806	0.98	409.41	0.9047
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8781	9.9491	-	9.66	0.8015	9.74	4073.27	9.0007
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0830	1.01	421.86	0.9322
Kuwait Dinar	3.3096	2.3432	12.4127	1.2476	12.05	-	12.15	5081.91	0.9322
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212	1.0206	0.9911	0.0823	-	418.10	0.9239
Lebanese/1000	0.85	0.4811	2.4425	0.2455	2.3704	0.1968	2.3918	-	2.2097
Egyptian	0.2947	0.2087	1.1054	0.1111	1.0727	0.0891	1.0824	452.55	-

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	18.38	18.06
W. Texas	19.30	18.82
Bonny	18.38	18.06
Dubai	17.00	16.87
UL Gas	178.00	178.00

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4622	0.16024	0.3854	30.5427
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.47201	0.16363	0.38364	31.1905
KW Dinar	3.3096	5.73723	1.98888	4.74669	379.075
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.5977	1.59413	3.83436	303.859
CY Pound	1.9444	3.3693	1.1674	2.8089	222.514

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	336.4	336.9
Silver (oz's)	4.72	4.74
Platinum (oz's)	419	423
AL (3 Months)	1565	1567
CU (3 Months)	2406	2410
Zinc (3 Months)	1410	1411
Lead (3 Months)	623	626
NI (3 Months)	6950	6970

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)					
Cncy	Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	Year
USD	5.55	5.55	5.59	5.59	6.12
GBP	6.48	6.48	7.06	7.06	7.06
JPY	0.89	0.82	0.51	0.57	0.88
DEM	2.95	3.04	3.06	3.10	3.15
FRF	3.23	3.27	3.33	3.36	3.40
CHF	1.19	1.30	1.21	1.21	1.31
ITL	6.77	6.73	6.64	6.48	6.39

Main Equity Indices							
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
New York	DOW JONES	7691.56	37.31	0.49	7718.93	7653.79	7654.25
New York	S&P 500	888.13	8.45	0.92	891.22	883.68	883.68
London	FT-SE 100	4826.7	-31.2	-0.67	4852	4823.1	4857.9
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	20523.75	-101.01	-0.49	20742.7	20523.8	20624.8
Paris	CAC 40	2889.43	-4.21	-0.15	2900.38	2875.28	2893.64
Frankfurt	DAX	3795.41	-8.85	-0.23	3811.44	3785.35	3805.29

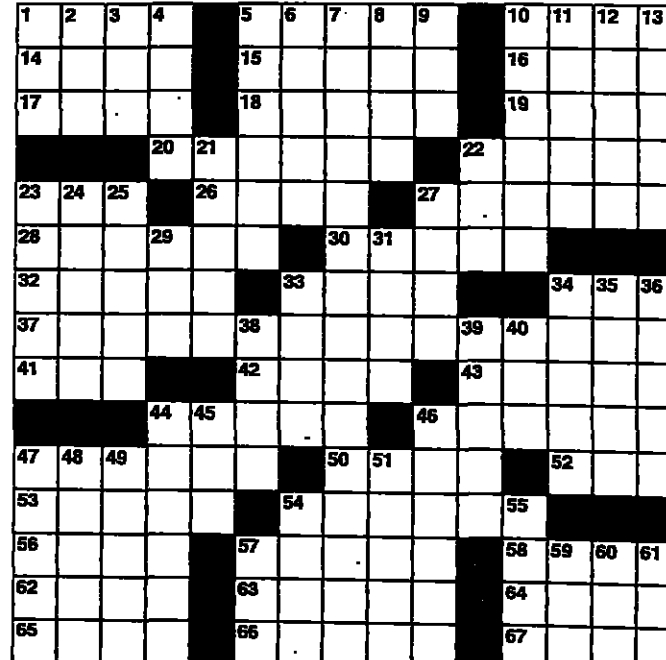
Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	165.87	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1707	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	326.5	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	139	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	22.36	Spot
Tea (std/kg)	138	Spot
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	480	Spot

JOD Cross Rates			
Currency	Buy	Sell	Set
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	
GB Sterling	1.758	1.781	
DE Mark	0.4092	0.4112	
CH Franc	0.4922	0.4947	
FR Franc	0.1216	0.1222	
JP Yen	0.6205	0.6238	
NL Guilder	0.3642	0.366	
IT Lira	0.4199	0.422	

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- Sweetheart
 - Tooth
 - Go without food
 - Beehive State
 - Hippodrome
 - podrida
 - Loco
 - Edna Ferber novel
 - Inlets
 - City on the Rhone
 - Factor
 - Water barrier
 - Double agent
 - Score
 - Irregular
 - Winter hazard
 - maid
 - Box
 - shot (photo)
 - Tea conclusions
 - Theater sign
 - Sanity
 - Follow
 - Money for Pierre
 - Changes
 - Doublecross
 - Golden rule word
 - Pigment
 - Plant pest
 - Dashing
 - Albert or Tipper
 - European card game
 - Saharan
 - Delightful place
 - Large quantity
 - Telegram
 - Indecent
 - Sired
 - Dawdling



by Samuel K. Flegner

Friday's Puzzle solved:

POKE	SCAPE	SUDS
AMEN	ALLEN	ATOP
PINT	DATED	LANA
ATTHE	DROPO	FAHAT
RULE	RAM	
BEWARE	HASTINGS	
AMOLE	SAREE	OLE
GIRL	BORIS	SLAV
ELK	PORED	SCARE
LESSE	ENSE	CORNER
USE	BOLA	
SPURO	OF THE	MOMENT
LURE	IRENE	BRIO
ORAL	SIRET	LINE
EELY	HOSTS	ENOS

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- DOWN
- Kind of wrench
 - One — time
 - Lose firmness
 - Shredded tobacco
 - Cro —
 - Bay window
 - Tea conclusions
 - Soprano Mofio
 - Type of race
 - Disregard on purpose
 - Extraterrestrial
 - Viewpoint
 - Appetizing
 - board
 - Reverence
 - In the — (gloomy)
 - Lead — (listen)
 - Paris subway
 - Sea bird
 - Fido's doc
 - Where Vientiane is
 - Revolve
 - Thought
 - Exorbitant interest
 - Simpletons
 - Influence
 - Ancient Greek serif
 - Can. prov.
 - Quaker
 - Wonderful
 - Not in motion
 - Roll with a hole
 - Lyric poem
 - Flung
 - Belini opera
 - Pintail duck
 - Talk raucously
 - Sphere
 - Grande or Bravo
 - Nettle
 - Susan of TV

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Finish up some career activities at home this morning, and don't get involved in expensive pleasures later today. Lend a hand to a good friend who will return the favour when you are truly in need of assistance.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Take care of any vital communication today before it's too late, then take care of your shopping so that you will have the necessities for the days ahead. This is not a good time for entertaining guests so wait until another time.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Take care of bills and letters today which have been piling up so that you give the appearance of being quite successful. It is important that you take no risks while driving on the highway or with your reputation.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be sure you don't commit yourself to any large expenditures today or you could find yourself short of funds when it really counts. This is a good time to do some cleaning at home, so make every effort to get it done.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you plan your day carefully in the morning today, you won't run into delays and other difficulties which could become present. Be sure to avoid any disagreements, especially with your loved ones or there could be a difficult situation.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Some boring tasks have to be handled sooner, or later, so take care of them today and get them off your mind. Be tactful with your mate and avoid saying anything which could develop into a difficult situation.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You should not be forceful in pursuing your personal goals today, or you could offend a great many people, get into business matters early this morning so that you can have later this evening for recreational activities.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You will get an idea this morning which should be put in motion quickly, since later on some difficulties will require your total attention. Later, this evening will be good for meeting with knowledgeable people for their advice.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Labour on business matters this morning, then do something which will make your mate happy. You should not be frivolous later this evening or you could find yourself short of funds then the time arises.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) An unkind word was not meant the way you interpreted it today, so you should not take offence. Take care of telephone calls you have been putting off so that you can appear to be quite productive.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Don't let someone with an inflated ego annoy you today and cause you to lose your temper. Be sure you don't overexert yourself later this evening or you could be so exhausted that you miss those important tasks.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You should not be extravagant this evening where recreational activities are concerned or you could be short of funds. Put together a creative plan of action which you can follow much difficulty.

Birthstone of June: Pearl — Moon Stone

Lebanon starts countdown for 8th Pan-Arab Games

JOC to finalise Kingdom's delegation this week

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — With only two weeks remaining for the start of the 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut, Lebanon, July 12-27, the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) is now trying to put the finishing touches on the Kingdom's delegation with the likelihood of some events possibly being cancelled in light of latest results and preparedness of some athletes.

Twenty countries have confirmed participation in the event and only Somalia and the Comoros Islands will be missing the biggest gathering of Arab youth since the event was last held in Syria in 1992.

JOC Technical Committee Chairman Sari Hamdan said medical check-ups of some athletes showed that they had injuries that would bar them from successfully competing and "there would therefore be no point taking them."

Dr. Hamdan noted that federations had a week remaining to finalise their teams and that the minister of youth would meet the delegation July 6.

He said federations were required to name the most promising athletes and teams with a chance of attaining at least a halfway standing in their respective sports as a minimum criteria to qualify for participation.

Twenty-one events have been set for the Games excluding handball, gymnastics, body-building, hockey, diving and water polo for technical and financial reasons.

Jordan dropped participation in fencing, cycling, tennis and volleyball, and the entry form now includes participation in athletics, basketball, karate, swimming, taekwondo, table tennis, boxing, equestrian, soccer, weightlifting, judo, freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling and shooting. Other events at the Games include golf, yachting and kick-boxing.

Basketball is scheduled to be the only team sport Jordan's women will take part in. Individual sports are athletics, swimming, taekwondo, equestrian and table tennis.

However, following their latest results against the Syrian national team last week, basketball also bears a question mark.

Out of three matches, the men's team won one match while the women's team failed to win a single match and the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) Thursday decided that some players be given a chance to join the team before the final lineup is decided.

A JBF press released said that it was important to upgrade the team's fitness and form and participate in order to maintain continuity for the women's game which had been non-existent from 1983-1995 when the team took part in the Asian Championship.

"The fact that only three clubs have women's teams makes the possibility of gaining match-experience and upgrading players form impossible unless the team is given the chance to participate in such championships," JBF women's basketball official Nadia Abu Judum told the Jordan Times.

"Lack of funds, practice courts and training camps makes it difficult to further improve the team. Our capabilities are therefore limited and nothing more can be expected."

Five teams — Lebanon, Egypt and Tunisia, Jordan and Syria — will contest the women's basketball event at the Games.

Compared to the preliminary list, the Kingdom's delegation was later downsize to 182. Eighty-nine men and 32 women athletes will be competing in 13 of the 21 events at the Games. The delegation will also include 61 team managers, coaches and officials.

The latest list cuts down the number of athletes and referees in some games and excludes four games as Jordan had previously announced it would be competing in 17 events.

The preliminary list of the 257-member delegation had included 130 men and 37 women athletes, 64 officials and coaches, and 26 referees.

Participation in the event is expected to cost around JD 92,000.

In order to cut down on cost, each team will arrive in Beirut one day prior to its event and leave following the end of their respective competitions. Each federation will also pay 40 percent of expenses incurred by the Ministry of Youth — something most federations might not be able to do.

However, officials have noted the importance of taking part in the Pan-Arab Games which have only been held seven times since 1953.

The delay in finalising the delegation up to one month before the event, and the uncertainty surrounding the athletes and games Jordan is slated to take part in has been criticised by sports officials citing it as a main point hindering serious preparation and displaying a lax attitude towards the biggest Arab sports gathering.

Jordan had finished 9th overall in the last Pan-Arab Games with 1 gold, 6 silver and 6 bronze medals.

Hosts Syria topped the medals table with 48 points, 31 silver, 37 bronze followed by Egypt and Algeria.

The event was due to be held last year but was postponed after the Israeli bombardment of southern Lebanon.

Lebanese officials have said that work was still under way on facilities including the main stadium where the opening ceremony will be held. Venues include facilities in Beirut, Tripoli, Beqaa, Qafra, Sidon, Ein Sa'ada, and Jounieh.

According to latest reports, the biggest contingent will be that of hosts Lebanon with 563, followed by Syria 359 and Egypt 343.

Lebanese sports officials last month announced that the main sports city cost \$72 million adding that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had helped in financing the project while pledges from other Arab countries had not been received.

Jordan has received preliminary approval to host the 9th Pan-Arab Games in 1999 following a meeting of ministers of youth from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, the Arab League and the Arab Sports Federation held on the sidelines of the visit of the ministerial committee of the Arab Ministers of Sports to inspect Lebanon's preparations for the Games.

The Pan-Arab Games were held in Alexandria 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961, Cairo 1965, Damascus 1976, Morocco 1985 and Damascus 1992.

Spain surprise Croats in European basketball

GERONA, Spain (R) — Spain came from behind to produce the first upset of the European Basketball Championship on Thursday by beating the fancied Croatian side 78-71.

The result guaranteed the hosts a place in the second phase.

Lithuania and Greece will also go through after notching up their second victories in close games against France and Russia respectively.

Despite the defeat Croatia are almost certain to go through, as only the bottom team from each group will be eliminated.

Boosted by Wednesday's comfortable win over Turkey, Greece started strongly to build up a commanding 39-21 lead against Russia.

But consecutive three-pointers from Igor Koudelin enabled the Russians to go in at the break only 10 points adrift, and in the end the Greeks struggled to take the game 74-72.

Lithuania were once again led by Arturas Karnisovas in the 94-88 win over France. Karnisovas scored 31 points and was backed up by centre Eimilis Gintaras, who scored 27.

Navratilova calls for return to wooden rackets

LONDON (R) — Nine-times Wimbledon champion Martina Navratilova has called for a return to wooden rackets in order to revive spectator interest in tennis.

"We are not going to get finesse with these big rackets," the American former world number one said in a television interview.

"Go back to wooden rackets. Baseball is not played with aluminium bats."

"If they played with all this space-age material in Major League baseball we would have home run derby."

Steady rain continues to plague Wimbledon

Frustrated fans criticise lack of roof

WIMBLEDON (AP) — Guess what? It's still raining at Wimbledon.

With heavy showers continuing Friday and no letup in sight, Wimbledon appeared headed to only the second consecutive washout in its 121-year history.

The only time two straight days were rained out completely was in 1909, also on the Thursday and Friday of the first week.

Already facing a backlog of 120-130 matches after the first four days, Wimbledon officials were considering scheduling play on the middle Sunday for only the second time in history.

But the forecast called for more rain through the weekend, and officials said they would wait until Saturday before deciding on Sunday play.

"It will be a tough call whether we will play on this coming Sunday," All England Club Chief Executive Christopher Goringe said.

"We have got to look at all the options and that's what we are doing at the moment, with certainly no decision being made for another 24 hours at least."

The tournament can also be extended into a third week, as it was last year when the women's doubles semifinals and final were played on the third Monday.

Referee Alan Mills said it would be possible to finish the tournament on the third Tuesday if necessary.

Mills has already decided to reduce men's doubles matches from best-of-five to best-of-three sets until the quarterfinals. Mills said he could even do the same for men's singles matches.

After Thursday's washout, only 94 matches had been completed. Twenty-six women, including Mary Joe Fernandez and Venus Williams, hadn't even hit a ball yet.

Thursday's rainout was the first since 1992, the fourth in 10 years and the 28th in Wimbledon history.

The only time there has been play on the middle Sunday was in 1991, when only 52 matches were finished in the first four days.

The sacrosanct day off turned into the most festive in Wimbledon's 127-year history. "People's Sunday" became a huge hit with fans, who transformed the usually staid All England Club into a combination of Woodstock and Wembley.



Venus Williams of the United States covers her head as rain stops her practice session at the Wimbledon tennis championships. Weather forecasters are predicting a wet day which may hamper play for the second consecutive day of the tournament (Reuters photo)

"I personally thought the middle Sunday in '91 was probably the most inspiring day that I have spent at Wimbledon," Mills said. "The people and the atmosphere were just electric and I thought it was a great success."

But Mills noted that the weather forecast was good on that day in 1991, while the forecast for this Sunday is not.

"It would be a little silly of us if we, knowing the weather forecast, open up everything and we spend a day like today," he said.

Mills said playing on Sunday posed various logistical problems and the club would need authorisation from the local council, police and others.

For Friday, Pete Sampras, Goran Ivanisevic, Richard Krajicek and Boris Becker were among the men scheduled to play second round matches. On the women's side, Martina Hingis was due to play a second-round, while Williams was set to make her long-delayed Wimbledon debut.

All the wet weather brought up, once more, the question of why Wimbledon doesn't put a retractable roof on at least one of its two main courts. Essentially, Wimbledon's response is that no matter how much it rains, the club is not going to put up a roof.

"It would be nice if we could erect some sort of dome over the whole of the grounds, but it's just not practical," All England Club official Tim Phillips said.

"The issue is, if you have one roof on one court, on what is basically an outdoor tournament, how material is the benefit?"

Mills claimed that at the Australian Open the "players are not happy with just one court with the roof."

Phillips said the decision not to place a roof on the new court 1 was based on a range of considerations — financial, engineering, and a desire to keep centre court as the premier venue.

"We have looked at it, considered it from every single angle, and the view at the moment is where we are," he said.

But many of the 29,296 fans who waited all day Thursday without seeing a single point felt differently.

"It's really surprising they spent so much time and money on No. 1 court but did not put on a retractable roof," Julian Leech, 32, said. "It seems so obvious given the British weather. They should listen to the fans."

Grizzlies name Brian Hill head coach

VANCOUVER (R) — Brian Hill, who guided the Orlando Magic from infancy to the NBA finals, was introduced as the new head coach of the Vancouver Grizzlies Thursday.

The Grizzlies were a league-worst 14-68 last season and have won just 29 games in their first two seasons. Their first coach was Brian Winters, who was fired January 24 and replaced by Vice President Stu Jackson.

"I'm excited to be here and to be part of the opportunity that is synonymous with this franchise," said Hill. "Stu and I share the same vision for this team and I want Vancouver fans to know that I am committed to winning."

"We will continue to build the Vancouver Grizzlies in our efforts to bring an NBA championship to this city," Hill told the Magic to the 1995 NBA finals but was fired in February after a five-game losing streak dropped the team to 24-25.

"Brian's remarkable leadership skills and his basketball knowledge will be a great asset to our team," said Stu Jackson. "He has a remarkable coaching record and I'm confident that Brian will have a positive impact on our performance in our third season."

Hill was 191-104 in three-plus seasons with the Magic. After reaching the NBA finals in 1995, Orlando won 60 games the next season but was swept out of the Eastern Conference finals by the Bulls.

The Magic lost star centre Shaquille O'Neal to free agency and guard Penny Hardaway to injury. They stumbled to an 11-17 start before getting healthy and improving to 24-20 at the All-Star break.

But the Magic lost their first five games after the break, and Hardaway held a team meeting in a hotel room in which the players voted that they would like to see Hill out as coach, with assistant Richie Adubato taking over.

Winters was fired after guiding the Grizzlies to an 8-35 mark, running his overall record to 23-102. Jackson went 6-33 the rest of the way.

Vancouver has some promising players. Forward Shareef Abdur-Rahim was third in rookie of the year voting and Bryant "big country" Reeves is developing into a solid centre. Wednesday night, the Grizzlies added bowling green point guard Antonio Daniels with the fourth pick in the draft.

In addition, Vancouver's salary cap jumps from 75 per cent of the maximum to the maximum \$26 million on July 1, providing plenty of room to sign a free agent — possibly Detroit Pistons forward Otis Thorpe.

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Tel. 821081 after 4:00 p.m.



REMINDER

PRIMARY DENTAL FELLOWSHIP EXAMINATION

To be conducted by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in this University from Monday 28 July to Thursday 31 July, 1997.

The examination comprises both written papers and oral examinations in (a) Anatomy (b) Physiology and (c) Pathology and Microbiology of importance in dental surgery.

All dental graduates are eligible to apply to take the examination but the RCS in Ireland retains the right to decide who may sit its examinations.

The fee for this examination is JD440 which must be received together with an application form completed in English and the required supporting documents by the Dean, Faculty of Dentistry, Jordan University of Science and Technology, P.O. Box 3030, Irbid, Jordan (Tel. 02 295111 - Fax 295019) by midday Wednesday 2nd July, 1997 at the latest.

For application forms and further details please contact the Dean of Dentistry, JUST.

An intensive orientation course will be conducted for the 3 weeks which precede the exam (fees JD200) topics related to the exam will be covered by specialists.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TANNIA HIRSCH
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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AA9S 710822 06 AA9QJ6

The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

1st Pass 10th Pass 1st Pass 10th Pass

What do you bid now?

A - It is simply a matter of whether to raise to two hearts or make an invitational jump to three hearts. Despite only 14 high-card points, your prime controls and singleton make this hand too good for what partner might deem to be only a competitive raise. Jump to three hearts.

Q. 2 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AKQ CAJ86 0Q7632 485

Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one club. What action do you take?

A - The one thing you can't do is double — with a maximum hand for such action you guarantee at least three cards in each major. We won't castigate you for overcalling one diamond, but we prefer a wait-and-see attitude. Pass.

Q. 3 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AS443 CAQ52 0763 4AS

The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

Pass Pass 1st Pass 1st Pass

What do you bid now?

A - Your hand reveals to some 12 points in support of spades. Had you not been a passed hand and had partner opened, you would have to consider driving to game. Opposite a third-hand opening bid, allow some leeway and raise to three spades. Drury users, this is your day.

Q. 4 - Neither vulnerable, as

AAK10954 087 086 4Q84

The bidding has proceeded: WEST NORTH EAST WEST

10th Pass 1st Pass 10th Pass

What do you bid now?

A - Your queen of diamonds is a working card, but the queen of clubs is a doubtful asset. Opposite a partner who is surely short in spades, you do not have enough to insist on game. Invite by jumping to three spades, stressing the quality of your suit.

Q. 5 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

10983 CAKJ764 06 AK62

The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

10th Pass 1st Pass 10th Pass

What do you bid now?

A - With only a single club stopper and an unbalanced hand, don't rush into three no trump. For the moment, show your three-card spade support (you have already promised six hearts on this auction) and see how the bidding develops.

Q. 6 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AS 06 0AKQJ7 4AK8765

The bidding has proceeded: WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

INT Pass Pass 1st Pass

What action do you take?

A - You can make game opposite the right yarrowbough in partner's hand — either length in clubs, shortness in clubs, or a balanced hand with the queen of clubs could be enough for game in one minor or the other. Make partner choose by jumping to four no trump. That is unusual for the minors and bars partner from responding in hearts.

JORDAN TIMES FAX 696183

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL:634144

PHILADELPHIA "1"

John Cleese, Jamie Lee Curtis & Kevin Kline ... in

FIERCE CREATURES

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:634144

PHILADELPHIA "2"

Clark Gable and Vivian Leigh ... in

GONE WITH THE WIND

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 8:30

CINEMA TEL:699238

PLAZA

Jean Claude Van Damme ... in

MAXIMUM RISK

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420

CONCORD

CONCORD "1" Tom Cruise...in

JERRY MAGUIRE

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45

CONCORD "2"

Michael Jordan...in

SPACEJAM

Shows: 3:30, 6:00

Nabil & Hisham's Theatre

TEL: 625155

The actors are on annual leave
The theatre will reopen July 2, 1997

Tyson, Holyfield weigh the same

LAS VEGAS (R) — Champion Evander Holyfield will be at his heaviest when he defends his World Boxing Association title Saturday, and challenger Mike Tyson will enter the ring a trim four pounds (1.8 kg) down from their last meeting.

Both fighters weighed in Thursday at 218 pounds (99 kg) — meaning Holyfield is a full three pounds (1.4 kg) heavier than when he stopped Tyson last November to take away his crown.

In contrast, Tyson tipped the scales lighter than the 222 pounds (101 kg) he weighed seven months ago. "It's a perfect weight," said Tyson's trainer Richie



Boxing promoter Don King raises the arms of WBA heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield (R) and challenger Mike Tyson during their weigh-in. Both fighters weighed in at 218 pounds for their June 28 fight (Reuters photo)

Giachetti after the official weigh-in.

Asked to assess Holyfield's increased weight, Giachetti smiled, but said diplomatically: "I don't train him, so I can't tell."

There was no immediate comment from Holyfield's camp, which has been trumpeting how much fitter

and stronger their fighter is since the last bout.

Insiders said 218 pounds (99 kg) was the heaviest the champion had been in his career.

In another development Thursday, the Nevada State Athletic Commission rejected a protest by Tyson's camp against ref-

eree Mitch Halpern being in charge of Saturday's fight.

Halpern was the same man who refereed the November 9 fight and stopped it in the 11th round when Holyfield unleashed a barrage against a weakening Tyson.

Jordan's 1997 horse racing season kicks off

By Tanya Habjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The 1997 horse racing season kicked off with excellent competition and great performance times, Royal Racing Club (RRC) Chairman Sharif Jameel Bin Nasser said Friday.

Different categories of Arabian horses participated in the races, ranging from stable horses, Bedouin horses, and horses registered with the World Arabian Horse Organisation (WAHO).

The current 1.4 minute record scored during 1988 was challenged during the third class horse race by "Fiasaly." Fiasaly, owned by Mohammed Udwan, scored a 1.5 minute time during its first race of the year.

"This shows the start of a promising season with such good timings recorded during the first races," Sharif Jameel told the Jordan Times.

Sharif Jameel said that each season showed improvement reflected in higher safety records, improvement of perfor-

mance times, and a lower number of lame horses.

An average of five races — with 10 horses per race — will take place every Friday until mid-November.

The stable horses and Bedouin horses participate in separate races because of different levels of training, feed, and up keep.

"This is to encourage the Bedouins to keep racing," Sharif Jameel said. "There are more Bedouin horses participating than stable horses now."

Race winners receive JD400 per race, with a nominal amount of betting per race, Sharif Jameel said.

The Jordanian Cavalry inaugurated the season, showcasing sabre play, tent pegging, marching and racing.

"This displays the traditions of the Arabian horse," one spectator stated.

According to Sharif Jameel, Arabian horses are known for their agility, stamina, and manoeuvrability.

"Arabian horses are a part of our traditions, culture, and history," he concluded.

Asmussen faces moment of truth on Helissio

PARIS (AFP) — American jockey Cash Asmussen faces his moment of truth here on Sunday as he rides 1996 European champion Helissio for the first time in the Grand Prix de Saint-Cloud.

The Grand Prix de Saint-Cloud would normally take second place on a day when the Irish Derby is also run but this year's event has probably more significance for the top class races later in the season than the race at the Curragh.

Asmussen, Texan born but based in France for several years, takes the ride because normal partner Olivier Peslier has been claimed by Daniel Wildenstein for Loup Sauvage in the Irish Derby.

Helissio's connections, trainer Elie Lellouche and Spanish owner Enrique Sarasola, decided that as Peslier would also ride Wildenstein's French Derby winner Peintre Celebre in October's Arc de Triomphe then they might as well book Asmussen for the rest of the season — provided he gives him a good ride on Sunday.

Asmussen provides mixed reactions among the racing cognoscenti starkly highlighted by the savaging he received from Irish owner Oliver Lehanne for his ride on Oscar Schindler in the Arc last year, despite riding the outsider into third place.

Helissio, who will attempt to become the first horse to win successive Arc's since alleged in 1977-78, returns to the track after missing the Coronation Cup at Epsom following a training mishap.

The four-year-old colt, who became the first horse since alleged in 1977 to win an Arc by leading from start to finish, defends his Grand Prix crown against a small but select field.

Shantou, trained by English Derby winning trainer John Gosden, should provide the main opposition after picking up a group one race in Italy a fortnight ago.

The English colt, third in the English Derby last year and winner of the English St

Leger, likes generally to come from off the pace whereas Helissio provides a far more spectacular sight as he sets a searing gallop — so the scene is set for a thrilling finish.

Helissio, winner of seven of his nine races, looked as if he had never left the track during the winter when he returned and destroyed the Breeders Cup turf winner Pilsudski in the Prix Ganay at Longchamp in April.

It remains to be seen whether his lay-off since then has blunted his sharpness and that Shantou's more recent effort has handed the English challenger the edge.

A narrow defeat for Helissio would not unduly worry his stable as it is a preparatory race, albeit a valuable one, for July's King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes at Ascot.

The Irish Derby looked at one stage like it was going to be the championship derby

as both Peintre Celebre and Gosden's Epsom victor Benny The Dip were entered — but the Irish crowd will have to make do with Silver Patriarch, runner-up to Benny The Dip at Epsom after the other two were withdrawn.

Silver Patriarch, trained by John Dunlop for former postboy Peter Winfield, is a worthy odds-on favourite to take the prize as he was just a nose away from winning at Epsom after making up six lengths in the final furlong on Benny The Dip.

However, the tactics employed on him that day, ridden at the back by Pat Eddery so he would not use up his speed too early in keeping up with the pace, suggest that his connections are not entirely convinced that he will last a mile and a half.

London Knight, the wheel chair bound owner of Benny The Dip, has added to the

debate about who stays what distance as he persuaded Gosden to withdraw Benny from the Irish Derby and run him over a mile and a quarter next time out.

The fly, trained by Barry Hills in England, represents the only other runner from the English Derby, in which he finished fifth, while Casey Tibbs, named after a famous Texan rodeo rider in the 50's, comes to the race following a disappointing run in the French Derby.

Aidan O'Brien, who trains from the former stables of racing legend Dr Vincent O'Brien, mounts a three-pronged challenge including the filly Strawberry Roan.

Strawberry Roan, owned by the retired Monte Carlo based bookmaker Michael Tabor, was supplemented at a cost of 70,000 pounds (\$105,000) following her fast finishing second in the Irish 1,000 Guineas over a mile.

Copa America

Brazil destroy Peru to reach final against Bolivia

SANTA CRUZ (R) — Brazil steamrollered Peru's inexperienced team 7-0 Thursday to reach the final of the Copa America.

The ruthlessly efficient world champions were ahead after just two minutes and had taken a 4-0 lead by halftime in an embarrassingly one-sided contest.

Midfielder Leonardo, who scored two goals, was inspirational for Brazil, while striker Romario scored twice before limping off injured in the 70th minute after appearing to pull a muscle. He is expected to miss Sunday's final.

Ronaldo was the only let-down for Brazil. He got himself booked for a niggly off-the-ball challenge in the first half, missed an open goal early in the second and was eventually substituted. Their other goals came from Denilson, Flavio Conceicao and Djalmirinha.

Peru, who are involved in the marathon South American World Cup qualifying tournament, had brought what was effectively their under-23 side to the competition to prevent their top players being overwhelmed by too many fixtures.

The experimental side had gone beyond all expectations by beating Uruguay and Argentina on their way



Brazilian star striker Romario (C) kicks the ball in between Peruvian goalkeeper Miguel Miranda's hands as Ronaldo (L) looks on during the semi-final Copa America match against Peru in Santa Cruz. Brazil defeated Peru 7-0 to advance to the final against Bolivia June 29 (Reuters photo)

to Thursday's semi-final but they had clearly bitten off more than they could chew in trying to take on the full-strength world champions.

Brazil, attempting to win the tournament for the first time outside their own

country, face a stiffer task in Sunday's final when they play hosts Bolivia in La Paz, at 3,600 metres above sea level.

"It will be a clash of giants," said Brazil coach Mario Zagallo.

"We arrived here tired

after our tour to Europe and we have achieved more than I have expected. I will leave here with my head held high as I always have done when I have been in charge of the yellow and green team."

Schumacher gloomy, Villeneuve positive in France

MAGNY-COURS, France (AFP) — Germany's Michael Schumacher, unexpected Formula One World Championship leader and winner of the last race in Canada, was resolutely gloomy Thursday on the eve of first practice for the French Grand Prix.

The Ferrari driver described his current seventh point tie lead over Williams driver Jacques Villeneuve as precarious.

"We are coming to two circuits where it will be hard to finish in the points," he said of the race on Sunday and then in Britain two weeks later. "My lead could turn

around quickly. "I may be second after here and after Silverstone I don't know where I am going to find myself."

"What we don't yet know is whether other circuits that are coming up will hurt or help us."

The two-time world champion, famed for his skill in the wet, said he would be delighted if the expected downpour this weekend materialises.

"This is a circuit where we know we suffer a lot — we

will just have to employ some people to get rain. It should not be as bad for us then," he joked.

However, Schumacher refused to indulge in mind games with the relatively inexperienced Villeneuve, who crashed out in front of his home fans in Montreal.

"It wouldn't be right to say Jacques may have cracked under the pressure (in Canada). I don't think that's the case."

Schumacher said he believed the world title race

was wide open. "I'll fight to the end but there are 10 races to go things are so open that anybody could be champion."

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Eight members of Arafat's guard arrested for beating Palestinian

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian security forces have detained eight members of President Yasser Arafat's personal guard for beating a Palestinian into a coma over a personal dispute, a security official said Friday.

The official, who asked not to be named, told AFP that the members of President Arafat's Force 17 were suspected of involvement in the beating of Nasser Radwan, who has been in a Gaza hospital since Tuesday.

A colonel in Force 17, Abu Nasser Freihat, was also suspended from work for the duration of investigations into the beating.

One of his bodyguards was among the eight detained, the official said.

The head of the National Security Forces in Gaza, Abdul Razaq Mujaideh, who is investigating the incident, said the suspects would be tried.

Mr. Radwan was arrested at his home in Gaza Monday and driven away in a Force 17 car. The next day he was taken to hospital with a fractured skull, the Jerusalem-based Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group (PHRMG) said.

The PHRMG said Mr. Radwan's arrest was the result of an unspecified personal dispute with Mahmoud Zayed, the bodyguard of Colonel Freihat.

Officials at the hospital said Mr. Radwan was in a deep coma but would not confirm a report by the PHRMG that he had been pronounced brain dead.

Since the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994, at least 13 Palestinians have died in its prisons, some of them by torture at the hands of security forces.

Human rights groups have said torture is commonly used by the various security forces, which number around a dozen.

Retired CIA veteran goes public with Saddam assassination plot

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Publishing his three-year effort to overthrow President Saddam Hussein, a retired CIA veteran is criticising the agency for shifting its focus toward a quick coup against the Iraqi president.

Warren Mark, who worked for the CIA for 25 years before retiring six months ago, told the Washington Post the agency's costly failure to undermine President Saddam resulted from high-level pressure for a "quick kill."

"In northern Iraq we ran a political programme that was to eventually reduce Saddam's control over Iraq and make him nothing more than the mayor of Baghdad," Mr. Mark was quoted as saying.

"That kind of slow, salami-slicing operation worked in Afghanistan and against the Soviet Union in the cold war. But then came pressure from the top for the quick kill — for a coup on deadline — and we lost our way."

The Post said Mr. Mark declined to speculate on reasons for the shift but quoted two CIA sources as saying that pressure for a coup mounted when John Deutch became CIA director in May 1995.

Mr. Mark's account focused on agency efforts to help the Iraqi opposition put together a force that could take on an Iraqi army division in March 1995, the newspaper said.

The aim of that operation was to demonstrate the strength of the rebels and the unwillingness of the Iraqi army to defend President Saddam in the face of an armed insurgency.

A competing CIA effort to orchestrate a palace coup also failed, and U.S. efforts against President Saddam together cost at least \$100 million and "hundreds if not thousands" of Iraqi lives or freedom.

Mr. Mark said his activities in northern Iraq included organising airborne leafletting of Iraq with pamphlets ridiculing President Saddam, organising training for Kurdish rebels, and overseeing a huge public relations campaign against the Iraqi dictator.

Israel tightens security on beaches after bomb alerts

TEL AVIV (AP) — Security forces patrolled Tel Aviv's beaches on Friday, a week after an unexploded bomb was discovered in a beach bag and a telephone caller said a second device would be planted.

Officers on foot and horse back, paramilitary border police, civil guard volunteers and city inspectors combed the beaches for suspicious objects, such as unclaimed bags. Navy boats patrolled near the coast.

Last Friday, an Israeli stole an unattended bag from the beach, only to find

there was a bomb inside. It consisted of two pounds of explosives studded with nails, and had a timing device. The thief took the bag to police who defused it.

No Palestinian militant group has claimed responsibility for planting the charge. In recent years, the Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups have carried out a series of bombings in Israel in hopes of wrecking Mideast peacemaking.

The last Hamas blast went off in March in a Tel Aviv cafe. Three Israeli women

and the bomber were killed.

Earlier this week, police received a telephone call warning that another bomb would be planted on one of the city's beaches, the newspaper Haaretz said.

The Israeli weekend, when beaches are most crowded, begins at midday Friday and lasts through Saturday. Police spokeswoman Nitza Friedman refused to confirm or deny the Haaretz report. "We receive dozens of anonymous bomb threats, many of them from cranks," she told the Associated Press.

Palestinians ask Coptic Pope to allow Christians visit Jerusalem

CAIRO (AFP) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) appealed to the Coptic Christian Pope for the first time Friday to overcome his political scruples and allow his followers to make the pilgrimage to disputed Jerusalem.

The Palestinian minister in charge of Jerusalem affairs, Faisal Hussein, told the Egyptian weekly Al-Ahram Al-Arabi that Palestinians "wished to see Coptic pilgrims travel to Jerusalem" for financial reasons.

Mr. Hussein said he would discuss the issue with Pope Shenouda III, who has banned his followers from visiting Jerusalem until a solution has been found to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the Holy City.

"The battle for Jerusalem is currently an economic one," Mr. Hussein said. "We have to find an arrangement allowing Coptic Christians to visit holy sites in Arab east Jerusalem without Israel profiting."

The presence of thousands of Egyptians in Jerusalem on pilgrimages or for holidays and business would improve the (economic) situation," he said.

He said the PNA wanted money to help build new Arab homes to link Arab east Jerusalem and the self-ruled town of Bethlehem to the south, countering Israeli settlement building around the disputed city.

"This plan requires \$30 million a year, but we don't have the necessary funds," Mr. Hussein said.

Israel occupied Arab east Jerusalem in 1967. Pope Shenouda has said Copts cannot visit the city because they would be seen as "traitors to the Arab cause" while Israel continues to try to tighten its grip on Arab east Jerusalem by confiscating land and building homes for Jews.

But Mr. Hussein countered: "If someone visits a prisoner (the Palestinians), it does not mean that they recognise the prison warden (Israel)."

More than 5,000 Copts ignored the Pope's ban to visit Jerusalem in 1995 amid optimism over the peace process following the launch of Palestinian self-rule the previous year.

But the election of right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996 put them off, and hardly any visited Jerusalem for Easter this year.

Philippines Muslim leader visits Iran

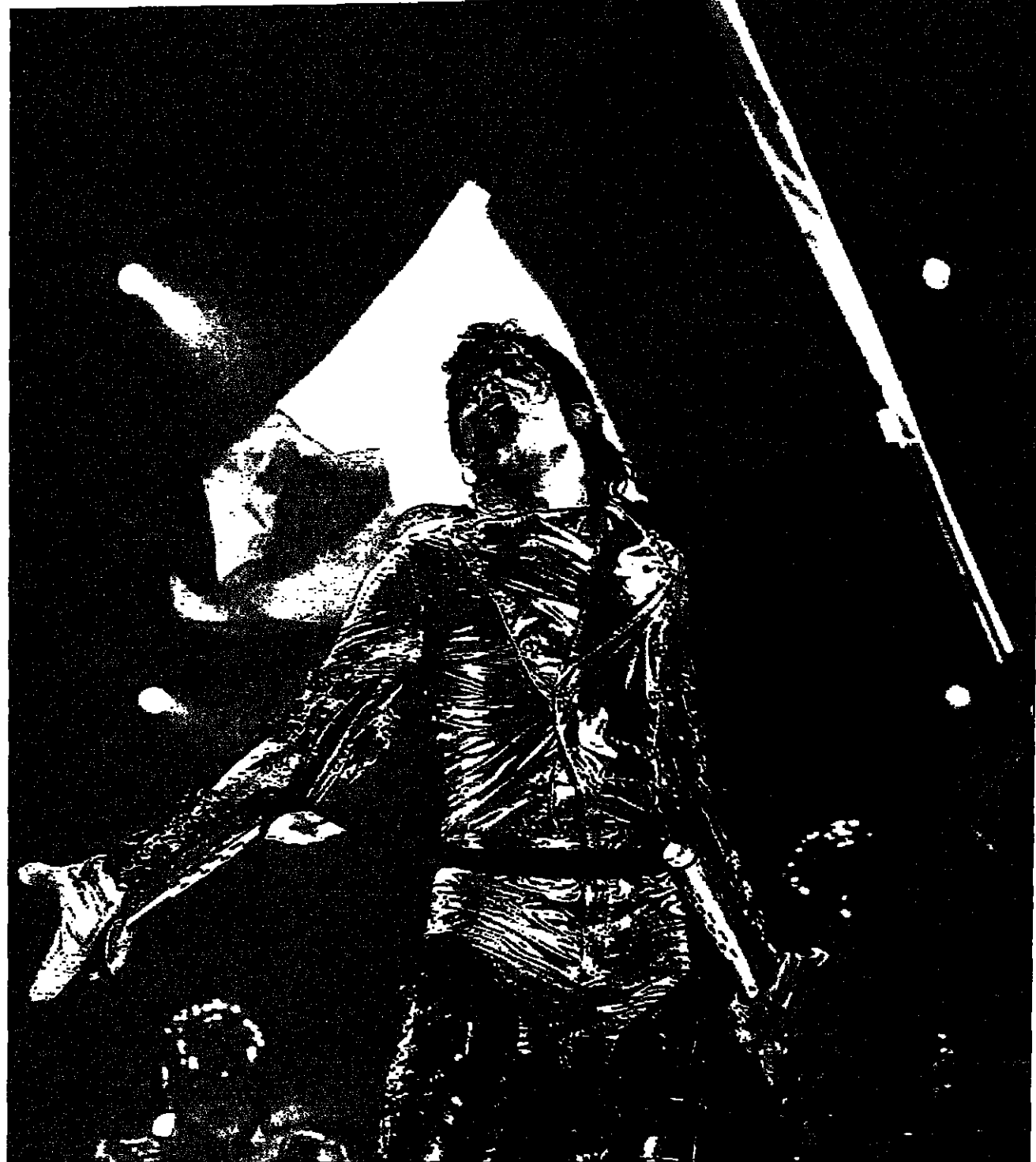
TEHRAN (AFP) — Nur Misuari, a former rebel leader in the war-ravaged Muslim island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines, arrived in Tehran Friday for a four-day visit, the official IRNA news agency said.

Mr. Misuari, now autonomous governor for the region, said on his arrival that discussions would focus on the development of economic relations between Mindanao and Iran, as well as the opening of a chamber of commerce.

Mindanao is home to the four-million-strong Filipino Muslim minority. Mr. Misuari was installed last year as governor following the historic signing of a peace agreement between his Moro National Liberation Front and the Philippine government, ending 24 years of bloody sectarian strife.

However, fighting continues to rage between the rival Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels and government troops.

Iran, whose President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani visited the Philippines in October 1995, actively supported the separatist insurgency in Mindanao but backed last year's peace negotiations.



Michael Jackson starts his four-concert French leg of his world tour attempting to combat his dropping popularity at home by hitting on the international market for support (AFP photo)

Jackson starts world tour with manager working hard to repair tarnished image

PARIS (AFP) — Behind the sunglasses and mask, under his pallid skin and far away from the adulating crowds, Michael Jackson is really just an ordinary, misunderstood boy.

At least, that's according to his new manager, Tarak Ben Ammar.

"He's an ordinary boy (actually, he's approaching 39), perfectly normal, whose only concern is being creative all day," Tarak told the French daily Liberation.

Mr. Jackson has begun the four-concert French leg of his world tour. Dogged by public relations problems, the tour is seen as a bid to

revive flagging sales by tapping into foreign markets.

Tarak, a film producer whose Tunisian studios were used as the location for staging the Star Wars and Raiders of the Lost Ark blockbusters, said it was time to explode the myths.

His trademark mask? "It is not for health reasons, but so the paparazzi don't hassle him mercilessly."

The accusations that Jackson was whitening his skin? "He suffers from a disease called vitiligo, which causes the loss of skin colour. His doctors should have announced that."

Vitiligo, according to the dictionary, is a skin disease characterised by smooth white patches on various parts of the body caused by the loss of the natural pigment.

And the 26-million dollar payout over allegations that he had molested a 13-year-old boy?

"If he hadn't done that he would have been psychologically destroyed. He could never have stood people dissecting his life, his body, his photos for six weeks, in a trial which would have been live on world television."

With his popularity on the wane at home, Mr. Jackson's promoters want him to work Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

"He is sad his country rejects him," Tarak added, "but he's not bitter. He's full of plans."

Immediately however, he has a job on tour to do. His first concert in Lyon in eastern France was not a sell-out, and only one of his two Paris dates this weekend is sold out.

Then he travels on to Austria, Germany, Britain, Ireland and Switzerland, fitting in an extra French concert on July 27.

Isolation and hostility face Israeli academic in Cairo

CAIRO (AP) — The director of the Israeli Cultural Centre in Egypt's capital flips through a thin Arabic-language pamphlet.

He stops at a picture of himself with the caption "Professor Sasson Somekh, the famous Jewish spy."

Life in the Arab World's largest city has been frustrating for Mr. Somekh, and it is only becoming more so as Egypt's cold peace with Israel turns frigid.

Egypt's press has stepped up attacks on Mr. Somekh and the centre. Egyptian academics who once considered visiting Israel have halted contacts. Even Mr. Somekh's American-born wife, Terrie, found doors closing — a job offer was withdrawn after a potential employer read a scathing article on the centre.

"We are pariahs here," said Mr. Somekh, 63, a greying, soft-spoken professor of Arabic literature from Tel Aviv University who is one of the world's top experts on Naguib Mahfouz, the Egyptian author who won the 1988 Nobel Prize in literature.

Mr. Somekh said he plans to leave Egypt as soon as his term at the centre ends in October.

"We are being treated as though we are trying to rob Egypt of something, not as scholars," he said, sitting in his small office. On the wall is a painting of Saadia Gaon, a Jewish scholar born more

than 1,000 years ago in Fayoum, a town south of Cairo.

The Israeli Academic Centre was set up in 1982 by Israel's six universities to boost cultural ties with Egypt after the signing of the Israel-Egypt peace accord. But it was never well received because many Egyptians remain suspicious of their former enemy.

As the Middle East peace process stalled, that wariness has sometimes turned to hostility, especially in the news media.

"Appalling Israeli cultural scheme," the English-language Egyptian Gazette said in a headline for a story that accused the centre of trying to "brainwash students with Israeli ideas and thaw the ice between Egypt and Israel."

Mr. Somekh dismisses as ridiculous newspaper reports that the centre is spying on Egypt.

He agreed to head the centre in 1995, two years after Israel signed its peace agreement with the Palestinians. He hoped for warmer relations with Egypt and envisioned the centre growing from a library putting on lectures on Israeli history and culture into a meeting place that would expand ties between scholars.

"I had a feeling things were changing," said Mr. Somekh, who was born in Baghdad but fled to the newly established state of

Israel in 1951 along with many in Iraq's Jewish community.

Mr. Somekh's optimism began to fade after an April 1996 Israeli artillery blitz in southern Lebanon killed almost 100 Arab civilians taking shelter in a United Nations peace keeping base. Israel says the shelling was a mistake.

Mr. Somekh said he got calls in the middle of the night from Egyptian friends who told him: "Sasson, how could you do this? I am ashamed to be pro-peace."

Visitors to the centre slowed from the usual 20 or so a day to a trickle.

"It is not good to go if there are problems," said a professor of Hebrew who attends lectures at the centre and has visited Israel repeatedly. "If I go there, it will seem as though I agree with what the Israeli government is doing."

He refused to give his name for fear his colleagues would shun him if newspapers published that he had visited Israel.

The tense situation deteriorated further after Israelis elected Benjamin Netanyahu's conservative government a year ago.

"When I tell people I am Israeli, the typical response is, 'Why did you elect this awful prime minister?'" said Mr. Somekh, a leftist who opposes Mr. Netanyahu's policies. "I

hear this every day."

The centre is housed on the third floor of a small building along the Nile that would be unremarkable except for the police officers standing in front with assault rifles.

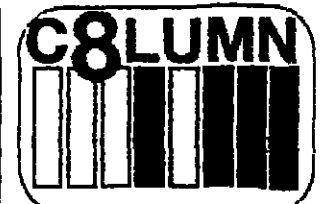
"I don't feel threatened, but I am careful," Mr. Somekh said.

At a recent lecture at the centre, about a dozen Egyptians — students and professors of Hebrew — chanted in Hebrew with a few Israelis.

Ashraf Mohammad, a recent graduate of Ain Shams University, said he visits the centre despite warnings from family and friends.

"The centre does an important job of strengthening students' knowledge of Hebrew," he said.

In his office, Mr. Somekh displayed his collection of pamphlets on the centre, including "The spy's nest in dear Egypt: the secret files of the Israeli Academic Centre." The pamphlet includes a picture of Mr. Somekh and identifies him as a Jewish spy.



Netanyahu's wife cracks in TV interview

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's wife Sara stopped a television interview for 30 minutes after it touched on his extramarital affair, a witness said. "She repeatedly got out of her chair, and she shouted at the interviewer. She was very angry," the witness, at Israel's Channel One television, told Reuters. Witnesses told the Yedioth Ahronoth daily the first lady became angry 20 minutes into the interview when asked if she tried to block the appointment of a woman cabinet minister on suspicion she was romantically involved with the prime minister. Her anger grew after a question about what is known in Israel as "the videotape affair" — Netanyahu's admission of adultery before becoming prime minister. "I am not prepared to continue like this...I want everything erased and start (the interview) again," Yedioth quoted Mrs. Netanyahu as saying.

Lebanese housewife puts groceries on slate of top politician's wife

BEIRUT (AFP) — A Lebanese housewife was arrested Thursday for putting her grocery bills on the slate of a top politician's wife whom she had never met, judicial sources said. Suspicions were raised after Leyla Zghayyar totted up a bill of \$500 buying fruit and vegetables from a grocer's shop near the Beirut home of parliament speaker Nabih Berri, claiming to work for his wife Randa Berri. She was caught red-handed Thursday trying to buy more food, and now faces a prison term of two months.

Wiesenthal says Evita likely stashed Nazi loot

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Simon Wiesenthal, the hunter of Nazi war criminals, said in an interview that Argentina should investigate whether Eva Peron stashed Nazi gold in secret Swiss bank accounts. Journalists and historians have long suspected that Peron, wife of Juan Peron who ruled Argentina from 1946-55 and from 1973 until his death in 1974, used her European tour in 1947 to deposit bribes from Nazi war criminals in Swiss banks. "In principle, I would say it seems probable that those accounts exist because of the contacts Evita had with German and Croatian war criminals," 88-year-old Wiesenthal, himself a Holocaust survivor, told Argentina's Pagina 12 newspaper.

Cat survives 40-foot flaming free fall

EAST CORINTH, Maine (R) — If cats do, in fact, have nine lives, then Sparky has used up much of his quota over the past few days. The gray tiger cat spent three days trapped on a utility pole, surviving thunderstorms and a jolt by a 7,500-volt power line on Tuesday that sent the flaming feline plummeting to the ground. "There were sparks everywhere ... and then I saw the cat fall," Lucille Randall told the Bangor Daily News. The incident briefly left 1,000 residents without electricity. Emergency crews were arrived to put out the fire saw smouldering grass where the cat had landed, and were surprised to find Sparky meowing loudly but apparently unhurt aside from a singed tail.